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THE

HOLY LAND AND THE BIBLE.

A BOOK OF SCRIPTURE ILLUSTRATIONS GATHERED IN PALESTINE.

BY

CUNNINGHAM GEIKIE, D.D.,

Vicar of St. Martin's at Palace, Norwich.

WITH A MAP OF PALESTINE.

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NEW YORK:
JAMES POTT & CO., PUBLISHERS.
1888.

PREFACE.

I MUST urge it in explanation of my adding to the already copious literature treating, from one aspect or another, of the Holy Land, that the aim I have had in view in writing this book has been different from that of nearly every other work on Palestine, and that, if I have been able to carry it out successfully, the result should unquestionably prove very useful.

I visited Palestine with the intention of gathering illustrations of the sacred writings from its hills and valleys, its rivers and lakes, its plains and uplands, its plants and animals, its skies, its soil, and, above all, from the pictures of ancient times still presented on every side in the daily life of its people. Nothing is more instructive or can be more charming, when reading Scripture, than the illumination of its texts from such sources, throwing light upon its constantly recurring Oriental imagery and local allusions, and revealing the exact meaning of words and phrases which otherwise could not be adequately understood. Its simple narratives, its divine poetry, its prophetic visions, its varied teachings, alike catch additional vividness and force when read with the aid of such knowledge. The Land is, in fact, a

natural commentary on the sacred writings which it has given to us, and we study them as it were amidst the life, the scenery, and the local peculiarities which surrounded those to whom the Scriptures were first addressed.

While describing the various districts of the Holy Land and while noting their ancient sites, their past history, and their present state, I have sought to gather at every step contributions towards the illustration of the inspired text from every local source. A glance at the Table of Contents will show that all the country is brought before the reader in successive portions, from the extreme south to its northern limits: that is, from Beersheba to Damascus, Baalbek, and Beirout—an area including the whole Palestine of the Old and New Testaments.

The numerous Scripture passages quoted have been taken, as seemed most advantageous for the reader, from the Authorised or the Revised Versions, or from the Greek or Hebrew texts; and variations from the ordinary renderings have been made where, in order to express the full meaning of the original, such a course seemed necessary.

C. G.

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THE

HOLY LAND AND THE BIBLE.

CHAPTER I.

JOPPA AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD.

A BREADTH of apparently level foreground, backed by a range of purple hills, so nearly of equal height that they seem to form a table-land, is the first aspect of Palestine as the voyager coasts along it from Egypt in one of the numerous steamers which now touch at the different ports. Our destination is Joppa—"the Beautiful," or, perhaps, "the High"—one of the oldest cities in the world,[1] and the first possible landing-place as we sail northwards. There it is, at last, rising before us on its sloping hill, a hundred and fifty-three feet high; the flat-roofed houses looking down, terrace after terrace, on the waters. Half a mile out, steam is let off and the anchors slipped, for it is unsafe for large vessels to go any nearer the town. A strong west wind might drive them on the rocks, as there is no breakwater or harbour to offer shelter, and sudden steaming to sea must always be easy.

There is no difficulty, however, in getting ashore, if one have faith in the oarsmen who swarm round as soon as a vessel anchors. Competition reigns at Joppa as

[1] Jaffa is *Jaapu* in Assyrian.

elsewhere. Many more boats than can find passengers crowd towards the steps let down to the water from the deck. A Babel of cries, unintelligible to Western ears, fills the air. The motley throng of deck passengers of the most varied nationalities, who have till now littered three-fourths of the deck with their bedding and baggage, fare best in the noisy exodus, for they are virtually at home, knowing the language of the boatmen, and able at once to strike a bargain with them, without a contest about prices. For the last half-hour they have been busy packing. Veiled women who sat apart with their children, in a spot railed off for them, are now on the wing with the rest. Figures in every variety of Eastern costume; Arabs with shawls over their heads, and striped brown-and-white "abbas," or mantles; black Nubians with red fezzes, blue cotton jackets and trousers; brown Levantines in European dress; Syrians or Egyptians, in turbans and flowing robes of all shades, press towards the stairs, many of them throwing their softer packages over the ship's side into the boat they have chosen, to facilitate their departure. Bare legs and feet are mingled with French boots and red or yellow slippers; smooth faces, with formidable black beards, or venerable white ones. But the storm is too violent to last. Each minute sees it by degrees subside, as boat after boat shoots off under the oar-strokes of strong-armed rowers, no less strange in their dress than any of their passengers.

The boats for Europeans and those who shrink from the native crowd, have not long to wait, and at last we too are sweeping towards the town. But it needs skill as well as strength to make the voyage safely. The nearly flat-bottomed cobles have to steer through an opening in the reefs only about a hundred feet wide, and the swell which rises with the daily forenoon land breeze

may carry them too much to one side or the other. If the sea be rough there is real danger, for boats are occasionally lost, and as sharks are not unknown, they and the water offer two ways out of the world. The rocks stretch north and south before the town, in a semicircle, some of them rising high out of the water; others only indicated by the surf breaking over them; the perilous entrance being known only to the local boatmen. Once through it, however, danger is past, and we find ourselves in a broad but shallow harbour. There is a wider opening to the north, seldom used on account of its distance from the port; and there was once, apparently, a third place of possible landing, at the Moon-pool, to the south, but this has long been closed by silt and sand.

Landing is itself a new sensation for Europeans. Some twenty or thirty yards from the shore you are seized and carried off in the bare arms or on the back of a boatman; the water being too shallow to permit a nearer approach to the old tumble-down quay, built of stones from the ruins of Cæsarea; the base or capital of a pillar sticking out here and there, mixed with great bevelled blocks of conjectural antiquity. Strong arms lift and push you up a rough step or two, and you are fairly ashore, to find yourself amidst the houses, streets, and people of a new world.

There has always been the same difficulty in landing, for the rocks have been as formidable from the beginning of time, the water over them as treacherous, and the inside bay as shallow off shore, so that you have fared no worse than bead-eyed Greeks or hook-nosed Romans did thousands of years ago. While Palestine was held by the Christian nations, Venice organised a spring and autumn packet-service to Joppa, and built a mole, of

which the remains were still visible last century, to protect the shipping. It appears, however, to have been of little use, and since then, under the Arab and Turk, everything has relapsed into a state of nature. On a coast so exposed the beach must always have been strewn with wrecks after great storms, before steam enabled vessels to bear out to sea and escape. About thirty years ago the remains of a galley of great antiquity were dug up, in some excavations on the shore; and Josephus tells us of a terrible loss of life in a gale off the port in the reign of Vespasian.[1] Phœnician, Egyptian, Syrian, Roman, Crusading, and modern fleets have all alike paid their tribute to the angry waters.

But I must mount my donkey and get to the hotel, at the north end of the town. No trouble has been given at the Custom House; indeed, I had nothing to do with it, a dragoman, or guide, who speaks English, managing all, for me and the rest of the European passengers. The road leads along a miserable apology for a street. Once paved, the stones have long ago risen or sunk into the ideal of roughness. No thought of drainage crosses the mind of an Oriental; the space before his door serving for a sewer. Dust-bins are equally a Western innovation, of which the East has not heard, so that every kind of foulness and abomination bestrews the way, or rises in pestilent heaps at its side. The buildings are of stone, with little or no wood in any part, timber being so scarce in Palestine that stone is used instead. The arch is, hence, universal, alike in places of business, houses, piazzas, or offices. As you jog on, you see that no light enters the shops except from the front—that they are, in fact, like miniatures of the gloomy holes made out of railway-arches among us.

[1] Jos. *Bell. Jud.*, iii. 9, 3. Even Josephus describes Joppa as not naturally a harbour.

Still on, till we pass under an arch over which is built the chief mosque of the town, with a six-sided minaret on the right side of it surmounted by a narrow projecting balcony for the muezzin, when he calls the faithful to prayers; a verandah-like roof sheltering him on all sides, with a short, round, dome-topped tower, of smaller diameter than the rest of the minaret, rising as its crown above. Stalls of all kinds abound. Tables of cakes or sweetmeats line the narrow street, which is more or less shaded by rude awnings of mats—often sorely dilapidated—or breadths of tent-cloth, or loose boards, resting on a rickety substructure of poles stuck where the owner pleases. The emptyings of carts of stone would make as good a pavement, and the same rich aroma of sewage from the houses as we have already inhaled follows us all the way. A turbaned water-carrier with a huge skin bottle on his back —a defunct calf, in fact, filled with water instead of veal, and minus head, legs, and tail—forces us to turn to one side, to pass him. A bare-armed and bare-legged apparition in a ragged skull-cap, cotton jacket, and cotton knickerbockers of very simple pattern, is chaffering with a roadside huckster for some delicacy costing a farthing or two, from some of the mat baskets on a table; the bearded vendor, bare-armed and with bare legs, sitting, as he tries to sell, his head swollen out with a white-and-red turban, and his body in striped pink-and-white cotton. Of course there is a lounger at his side looking on. An Arab in his "kefiyeh," or head-shawl, with a band of camels'-hair rope, very soft, round his head, to keep the flowing gear in its place, and a brown-and-white striped "abba" for his outer dress, is trying to cheapen a bridle at a saddler's, who sits cross-legged on a counter running along the street, under a shaky projection of wood and reeds, which gives him much-needed shade. At last we emerge into freer air.

There is no longer the pretence of stone under-foot, but, rather, mud beaten hard by traffic, so long as rain does not soften it into a quagmire. Had we gone up the face of the hill, many of the streets would have required us to mount by long flights of steps, while the road along the top of the hill to the south is simply a bed of deep, dry sand. Outside the town on the north, however, after passing through the open space where markets are held on fixed days, a pleasant lane, reminding one of Devonshire by its hedge of brambles, with nettles and grass below, leads to the modest quarters where I was to stay Intervals of prickly pear, a huge ungainly cactus, bristling with sharp spines, constantly brought one back from the West to the East, and the landscape from my window did so no less. From the sea, Joppa appears to be hemmed in with barren sand-hills, but, on nearer approach, a fringe of green borders it both north and south. These are the famous orange-groves, from which literally millions of the golden fruit are gathered in a good year. They stretch inland about a mile and a half, and extend north and south over a length of two miles. My room looked out on a sea of orangeries, glowing with countless golden globes, which formed a charming contrast to the rich green leaves. Other orchards of pomegranates, lemons, almonds, peaches, apricots, bananas, and citrons, are numerous; for beneath the sand blown in from the sea the soil is rich and fertile. It is no wonder that Joppa has always been a famous summer retreat from Jerusalem. The shady paradise of its groves, and the cool sea-breeze, are a great attraction. Sea-bathing would be another charm for Europeans, but Orientals have curious notions about cleanliness. Hence no use is made of the shore for bathing. Asses and camels, laden with boxes of oranges, pass continually to the port. Great heaps of the fruit lie ready for packing.

Each tree has a number of stems, and every twig is heavily laden. White blossoms alternate with yellow fruit on the same branch. Here in Joppa the orange is grafted on the stock of a lemon, the produce being oval instead of round, and incapable of propagation from seeds.

The harvest is everywhere immense, the abundance of water being the secret of this fertility. Wherever a well is sunk in the orchards, it is sure to tap a spring at a very moderate depth. It seems, in fact, as if a great subterranean stream runs continually from the hills towards the sea, under the whole of the lowlands, from above Joppa to Beersheba in the far south; for water can be had everywhere if a well be dug. The rains which fall on the porous strata of the mountains, or on the soft bosom of the plains, filter downwards till stopped, not far below the surface, by a bed of hard limestone, which turns them off in a vast perennial stream, down its slope, towards the west. Every orchard has thus ample means of irrigation, effected by countless clumsy water-wheels, the creaking of which never ceases. These ingenious contrivances, though rudely enough put together, are at once simple and efficient. An ox, a mule, or an ass, yoked to a long pole, projecting from the side of a thick upright post and driven slowly round, turns this beam, which carries on its top a large horizontal wheel, with numerous wooden teeth, working into another wheel set up and down, and joined by a long wooden axle to a third, revolving, mill fashion, into and out of the well. This lets down and draws up in turn, as it goes round, a series of pottery jars, or wooden buckets, fastened to it at short intervals by two thick, endless ropes of palm-fibre or myrtle-twigs, the roughness of which keeps them from slipping. As the jars or buckets pass over the top of the wheel, full of

water, they empty themselves into a large trough, from which the life-giving stream runs into a little canal leading it through the orchard. This is tapped every here and there on its way, and thus furnishes numberless brooklets to moisten the roots of each tree; so that all, in effect, are planted "by the streams of waters."[1]

Modifications of the water-wheel are naturally met with in different parts of Palestine and Syria. Thus, on the Orontes, huge wheels, varying in diameter from fifteen to ninety feet, are set up between strong walls at the edge of the river, so that in revolving, by the force of the current, the rim, armed with a series of wooden buckets, dips into the water and fills each in succession, carrying the whole round with it till, as they begin to descend, after passing the top of the circle, the contents are discharged into a trough leading to a raised tank, from which little canals run off through the neighbouring gardens. This, it is said, was the machine by which water was raised from terrace to terrace of the "hanging gardens" of Babylon, to a height, in all, of four hundred feet, though the contriver of these wonderful imitations of a wooded mountain was wise enough to conceal, behind great walls, the means by which he kept it green.[2] In many places, however, very simple wheels are sufficient, when the water is near the surface. Thus, at the Virgin's Tree, near Cairo, and in many parts of the sea-plain of Palestine, a horizontal cog-wheel, fixed on an upright shaft, from which a long pole projects at one side, works directly into an upright wheel, hung with wooden buckets or earthenware jars, which, in turn, dip under the water, and duly empty their contents, as the wheel revolves, into a trough. A blindfolded ox at the outer end of the pole keeps the whole in motion as it paces round and round.

[1] Ps. i. 3 (Revised Version). [2] Diod. Sic., ii. 10.

Flower-beds and gardens of herbs are always made at a little lower level than the surrounding ground, and are divided into small squares; a slight edging of earth banking the whole round on each side. Water is then let in, and floods the entire surface till the soil is thoroughly saturated; after which the moisture is turned off to another bed, by simply closing the opening in the one under water, by a turn of the bare foot of the gardener, and making another in the same way with the foot, in the next bed, and thus the whole garden is in due course watered, though the poor gardener has a miserable task, paddling bare-legged in the mud hour after hour. It is to such a custom, doubtless, that Moses refers when he speaks of Egypt as "a land where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs,"[1] and it is also alluded to in Proverbs, where we read that "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as the water-courses; He turneth it whithersoever He will."[2] Only, in this case, the hand is supposed to make the gap in the clay bank of the streamlet, to divert the current. There used to be a wheel in Egypt worked by a man's feet treading on steps in its circumference, and thus forcing it round; a horizontal support over his head, held by the hands, keeping him up while doing so. But such a literal treadmill is not so likely to be the watering with the foot to which Moses referred, though small wheels of this kind are still to be seen in Palestine.[3]

[1] Deut. xi. 10. [2] Prov. xxi. 1, 2.

[3] Robinson, *Bib. Researches*, i. 542, thinks that the point in the reference of Moses is not to the *distribution* of the water, but rather to the *supply*. He would therefore regard the wheel turned by the foot as the mode of watering referred to by Moses. Niebuhr gives a sketch of such a wheel which he saw in Egypt. The labourer sits on a level with the axis of the wheel, and turns it by pulling the upper part to him with his hands, while

In front of my window, and on the right, the sand blown from the shore stretched along the coast, as it does everywhere in Palestine. The gardens of Joppa have been won from it by industry and irrigation, which needs only to be extended to increase at pleasure the area of supreme fertility. A palm-tree rose in the yard below, and a few more showed themselves here and there, clumps of other trees, also, brightening the view at different points. To the left, a burial-ground lay among scattered houses, and then came the town, standing out from the shore almost the whole breadth of its hill, up the steep slope of which rose its flat-roofed houses, white, grey, and red, shutting out all beyond. A tank for watering the orangery near the "hotel" filled a yard close at hand, while a set of sheds, built alongside it, showed the special characteristic of Palestine architecture in a series of massive stone arches, strong enough for a castle. All the houses, or most of them, are equally solid. Stone, as I have said, costs little, and wood is expensive, so that to enable the builder to dispense with timber, everything is arched. Sheds, verandahs, rooms, upstairs or on the ground floor, are all alike a conglomeration of arches, strong enough to bear stone floors, or floors of cement. If no earthquake pay a flying visit to Joppa, its houses, one might think, will stand for ever. In front of all this prodigality of stone and lime, stretched out the blue sea, with some steamers at anchor in the roadstead; the sky above, as I looked, almost equally divided between the deepest blue, and fleecy snow-white clouds.

he presses the lower part from him with his feet. Robinson saw such a well in the Wady es Sunt, where David killed Goliath. It was sixty feet deep, and the water was drawn up by buckets fixed to a rope passing over the wheel; a man pulling and pushing the wheel round with hands and feet (ii. 351). He saw also another wheel like this in the same district—the sloping uplands leading to the hills of Judah (iii. 21).

Joppa is a very busy place, and offers in its one or two streets of shops—for there are very few in the hilly part of the town—a constantly changing picture of Eastern life. These shops, as I have said, are simply arches, open by day, but closed at night, and standing in the sweetest independence of all ideas of regularity of position. At some parts the sides of the street are comparatively near each other, but at one place they bend so far back as to leave a wide space for an open-air market. Everywhere, however, it is the same under-foot. By night you need a lantern, or at least a pilot bearing one before you, to guide you clear of the holes, pools, rivulets of sewage, mounds of rubbish, blocks of stone, and varying uncleanness. Like all other Eastern towns, it is hardly lighted at all: the very few oil lamps hung up at distant intervals by private individuals before their houses serving no really useful purpose. The windows of an Eastern house, as a rule, look into the court at the back, so that none are seen from the street, except when there is a second storey. But even in this case little light is gained, as such windows are small, and darkened by lattices. This open woodwork is, indeed, a feature in all Oriental towns. It was through such a lattice that the anxious mother of Sisera looked when her fondly-expected son had been defeated by Deborah and murdered by Jael,[1] and through just such a casement did the thoughtful watcher look out in Solomon's time, to note the doings in the street below.[2]

Little use, however, is made after dark of such latticed chambers, except for sleeping, and thus the streets are not brightened by any light from them, while to add to the terrors of the outer darkness, the town dogs, which own no master, prowl round, noisy and fierce: a hateful yellow race, with long heads, almost like those of hounds.

[1] Judg. v. 28. [2] Prov. vii. 6.

Through the day, in the words of the prophet which vividly describe them, "they are all dumb, they do not bark; dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber;"[1] but after sunset they are astir, swarming through the streets and disturbing the night by their howling and uproar, as they roam about to eat up the foul offal and waste of the households, which in all Eastern towns is thrown into the public roadway; these canine scavengers thus saving the community from untold horrors of disease. It was in reference to this that our Lord spoke when He said, "Give not that which is holy" ("clean," in the Jewish sense) "to the dogs."[2] One needs a good stick to defend himself if he be abroad after dark. "Dogs have compassed me," says the Psalmist: "deliver my darling from the power of the dog!"[3] "At evening," says another psalm, "let them return, let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. They shall wander up and down for meat."[4] Sometimes, indeed, the dogs raise a dreadful barking if a stranger in unusual dress approach the village or appear in the streets, so that it was a pleasant assurance which Moses gave the Israelites, that when they set out from Egypt "not a dog should move his tongue against man or beast;"[5] and Judith calmed the fears of Holofernes by telling him she would lead him so safely that he would run no risk of discovery through these pests.[6]

But dogs are not the only dangers of the streets. Any person found in them after nine o'clock without a light is

[1] Isa. lvi. 10.

[2] Matt. vii. 6. "Throw" would be better than "Give."

[3] Ps. xxii. 16—20.

[4] Ps. lix. 14, 15. This text may allude to the jackals which prowl round cities and villages in open parts.

[5] Ex. xi. 7.

[6] Judith xi. 19.

in danger of being arrested by a town watchman, on whom one comes with a sudden start, the sound of feet making him stir in the darkness, where, perhaps, he has been asleep on the ground. This law was doubtless in force at the time when poor Sulamith, the bride in the Canticles, hastening after her beloved in the night, was seized by the watchmen, rudely beaten, and robbed of her mantle.[1]

The bazaar street of Joppa is, as I have said, comparatively broad even in the narrowest parts, but it is very different in the "clefts"[2] that do duty for streets in some other parts of the town. In these, the small windows above almost touch each other, and it is a difficult matter to pass any laden ass or camel plodding on below.

But let us wander on through the chief business street. At the mouth of one small arched shop a number of goldfinches in cages are hung up for sale, as others, no doubt, have been, over the land, for thousands of years back, for the maidens in Job's time toyed with birds kept in captivity.[3] The next arch is a carpenter's shop; the next a smithy. A string of camels, with firewood, passes: mangy-looking brutes, never cleaned, and suffering badly from itch in consequence. The hair is off them in great patches, poor creatures! Arabs, with striped "abbas," or cloaks, and "kefiyehs," or shawls, over their heads and shoulders, two rounds of a camels'-hair rope keeping them in their place, sit in the shade, smoking nargilehs, or water-pipes, in sublime indifference to everything but the gossip of the moment. Dreamy idleness is dear to the Oriental. He will sit in the same way in the shade of the orangeries, with fellow-idlers, through whole afternoons,

[1] Cant. v. 7.

[2] This is the meaning of *shūk*, the word in Hebrew for a narrow street (Prov. vii. 8; Eccles. xii. 4, 5).

[3] Job xli. 5.

and think it Paradise. Indeed, this idling seems the greatest enjoyment of the Joppa burghers.

Heaps of common painted pottery in the street invited purchasers a few steps farther on, and near them heaps of grain, in arched stores. A man sat on the ground hard at work grinding lentils into flour; turning the upper stone of the little mill wearily with one hand, as he held the under one with the other. I was glad to see, for once, a man rather than a woman at such work. Large numbers of cocks, hens, and chickens, tied by the legs, lay in the street awaiting purchasers. Eggs were for sale in great abundance. Men in turbans, tarbooshes, "kefiyehs," and striped "abbas," brown-and-white, sat on all sides, cross-legged, on the ground, in the open air, beside goods they offered for sale. An unveiled woman, of course a Christian, passed; a silver ring on one of her fingers, a wristlet of the same metal on her arm, and tattooed marks on her face. The practice of printing indelible marks on the face and body has been common in the East from the earliest ages. "Ye shall not print any marks on you," says Leviticus;[1] though there seems to be a limit of this prohibition in Exodus, where we apparently read of the deliverance from Egypt being kept in memory by signs upon the hand, and a memorial between the eyes; that is, on the forehead.[2] In Isaiah we also read of men subscribing with their hand, or as many translate it, "writing upon their hand," some proof of their loyalty to Jehovah. It would seem, therefore, as if the heathen signs tattooed by many ancient nations, as by some modern ones, on their faces or persons, were condemned, while others which recognised the God of Israel were permitted. Moreover, we read of the seal of

[1] Lev. xix. 28.

[2] Exod. xiii. 9. The word "sign" is that used for the "mark" on Cain, and for the blood on the houses of the Hebrews before the death of the first-born of the Egyptians.

the Living God being set on the foreheads of the redeemed,[1] hereafter: a metaphorical expression, indeed, yet one that could hardly have been used by St. John if all religious marks on the person had, in the opinion of his day, been wrong. But whatever may have been the custom among the ancient Jews, the practice of tattooing the hands, feet, face, and bosom is very common now, both in Egypt and Palestine. It is, indeed, universal among the Arabs, and Christian pilgrims submit to it at Jerusalem, as a memorial of having visited the Holy places. In Egypt the practice is very general among women of the lower classes, and even among men. The operation is performed with several needles, generally seven, tied together. With these the skin is pricked in the desired pattern; smoke-black, of wood or oil, mixed with human milk, is then rubbed in; a paste of pounded fresh leaves of white beet or clover being applied to the punctures, about a week after, before they are healed, to give a blue or greenish colour to the marks. It is generally performed by gipsy women, when a child is five or six years old.[2] Gunpowder is very often used in Palestine, the place tattooed being tightly bound up for some time after. Maundrell[3] describes the mode in which Christian pilgrims in his day—A.D. 1697—had their "arms marked with the usual ensigns of Jerusalem," powdered charcoal, gunpowder, and ox-gall being the ingredients of the ink used to rub into the punctures. Tattooing has, in truth, been employed in all ages, in well-nigh every country. To-day, the Hindoo has the mark of his God on his forehead, and the English sailor a whole picture gallery on his arms or breast. In Isaiah[4] there is a wonderful passage, of which such customs are an illustration. "Forget thee, O Jerusalem!" says

[1] Rev. vii. 5.
[2] Lane, *Mod. Egyptians*, i. 46.
[3] *Journey*, p. 100.
[4] Isa. xlix. 15, 16.

God, in effect; "how can I? for I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, so that, as often as I look down at them, thy walls are continually before me."[1] The mother may forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb, but God, thus always reminded of His people, must have them ever in His thoughts.

I am wandering, however, from my ramble through the bazaar. The ordinary dress of the women, of whom few were to be seen, was a long sack of blue cotton-stuff, without any fulness, but reaching from the head to the bare feet, leaving the natural shape unspoiled by artificial outlines. Any quantity of sweets, or garlic, or oranges, can be had from stalls at the doors of the shops, or in the streets; the oranges at two or three for a half-penny. Horse-trappings of all kinds had many sellers. Grocers, proud of their trade, sat amidst their stock spread out in boxes at the mouth of their little arch, or arrayed inside. Here is a humble café: only a dark open arch of no great size, with no furniture, and indeed quite empty, excepting that it has a clay oven, flat-topped, on which an atom of fire is kindled with a few bits of charcoal, to boil coffee when wanted. The turbaned proprietor is intently superintending the operation of getting the fire to light. A man with white turban and bare legs and arms sits pounding coffee-berries in a mortar, which he holds steady with his two feet, a long stick serving for pestle. A Bedouin sits in the middle, smoking a long wooden-stemmed pipe; an elderly apparition occupies a low rush stool and pulls at a nargileh in one corner, and at the other a man is asleep, with his back against the

[1] In Ps x. 14, God appears to be pictured as in the same way marking the sins of men on His hand, to bring them to judgment in due season. Instead of "requite it," we may read, "to put" or "set it upon Thy hand."

rough stone wall. At another café, farther on, a crowd of men are sitting on the same kind of low rush stools, in the open air, smoking nargilehs, but apparently buying nothing more than the use of the pipe. At one side, a seller of sweetmeats and fruits presides over his boxes and baskets, sitting cross-legged on the projecting front ledge of the café arch in all the glory of turban, flowing robes, and bare legs. Mysterious sausage-meat on tables in the streets, or in cook-shops, awaits customers, for whom a portion of it is squeezed round a skewer as it is wanted, and then laid over a lighted charcoal brazier on the table, till ready for eating. Milk, bread, and vegetables had their own purveyors—turbaned figures of imposing dignity, who seemed to think their dens the most important spots in the world. Leeks, carrots, radishes like Bologna sausages for length and thickness, had numerous buyers. Fish shops were frequent. Cobblers drove a brisk trade in the open air, condescending to mend slippers and sandals which would have been thrown into the dust-bin with us. Veiled women passed frequently. The street was crowded with strange figures, which from time to time had to press closely together to let a drove of mules or asses pass, laden with mysterious cases ready for export, or with huge rough stones, or boxes of oranges; or to make way for a string of silent, tall, splay-footed camels, similarly freighted, each tied to the one before it; the driver riding ahead on an ass, which they implicitly followed. Porters with weights which no Englishman would think of carrying trod on through a way readily opened for them, from selfish motives. How is it that men who live so poorly as these Eastern "atals" or "hammals" can manage such loads?

You stand aside to let one "atal" pass with three or four heavy portmanteaus on his back; another follows with a

box much bigger than himself; and a third, with two huge empty barrels, or a load of wheat, or of furniture; the road they have to travel, broken, rough, slippery, and often steep, making the burden additionally hard to support. I once saw half-a-dozen or perhaps eight men carrying a hogshead of sugar on a thick pole, the ends of which rested on their shoulders. It was in Constantinople, but Eastern porters are the same everywhere. They find constant employment, as there are no carts or wheeled conveyances. Generally wearing only an almost indestructible coat of camels'-hair cloth over their shirt, their whole stock-in-trade consists of a rope about five feet long. Piling their intended load together, they arrange their rope so as to keep it all in its place; then, crouching down with their back against it, rise with a sudden spring to their feet, assisted perhaps, for the moment, by someone near. A loud grunt, to empty their lungs, uniformly marks the terrible strain, but it perhaps saves them from a ruptured blood-vessel. They remind one of the heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, to which our Lord compares the spiritual slavery under which the Pharisees laid the common people. Perhaps the "atals" of Christ's day supplied the illustration; but His burden, let us rejoice to think, is light.

One of the chief sources of profit to the townsfolk is the crowd of pilgrims who land at Joppa every spring, on the way to Jerusalem, each of whom must spend some money in the town. A Greek monastery on the quay, and the Franciscan hospice at the top of the hill, offer shelter to a number, but very many seek lodgings among the townspeople.

On the south side of the town, at the edge of the sea, close to the lighthouse, one is reminded of the visit of St. Peter to Joppa by the claim of a paltry mosque to occupy

the site of the house of Simon the tanner. The present building is comparatively modern, and cannot be the actual structure in which the apostle lodged. It is, however, regarded by the Mahommedans as sacred, one of the rooms being used as a place of prayer, in commemoration, we are told, of "the Lord Jesus having once asked God, while here, for a meal; on which a table forthwith came down from heaven." Strange variation of the story of St. Peter's vision! The waves beat against the low wall of the court-yard, so that, like the actual house of Simon, it is close "on the sea-shore." Tanning, moreover, in accordance with the unchanging character of the East, is still extensively carried on in this part of the town. In the court there is a large fig-tree, which redeems the bareness of the spot; and a fine well close to the house, from which the water is drawn up by a rope turning on an axle worked by short fixed spokes, one end of it being in the wall, the other in an upright post. The roof is flat, with a parapet round it, but there is a broad arch underneath, the front of which is filled up with square stones, much weatherworn; the doorway, a mere opening in the stonework, without any door or woodwork, at the left corner of the arch; a window-space, half the size of this door, up towards the point of the arch; the stones once over it, to the point of the arch, no longer there; a second smaller doorway on the right side, half-way up the arch, at the turn of the rude stair by which the housetop is reached. In the arch on the right-hand side of the court is the mosque, in which a light is kept perpetually burning.

Let us go up the rough outside staircase, and, like Peter, withdraw for a time to the roof. Part of the building is inhabited, so that we cannot see the interior; but the view from the roof, and the roof itself, well repay

a visit. As in Peter's day, it is flat, with the domes of two arches on each side of the court bulging through the level. The parapet is partly built of hollow earthenware pipes, about five inches in diameter and eight or ten inches long, arranged in pyramids close to each other, letting in the cool wind, and enabling anyone to look out without being seen. From the top hang numbers of household details, some boxes for pigeons' nests among them. At one angle of the house there is a small square window-hole on the second storey, closed at night by a wooden shutter, now turned to the wall; a larger one, with its shutters open, is on another face, and others also, letting the light into the rooms; but the shutters of all are very rough and old. A pigeon-house is built in one corner against the parapet, the roof offering a promenade for its population. A rain-spout juts out from below the parapet, and there is a small chimney two or three feet high—a mere toy in size—but sufficient for a kitchen in which only a handful of charcoal is burned at a time. Similar flat roofs, with parapets, line the three sides of the hollow square of the court. From such a terrace St. Peter's eyes rested on the wide heaven above, and these shining waters —the highway to the lands of the Gentile. Fishermen were then, perhaps, wading between the rocks of the harbour, or moving over them, as now: a sight recalling long-past days to the old fisherman of Gennesaret. On the roof of a one-storeyed house below, a man is sleeping in the shade, while another near him is having his head shaved. A high-prowed, large boat lies near, with one mast crossed by a great bending spar fixed atop, raking far above our roof; the cargo of earthenware jars rising high over the gunwales. The parapets round the roofs, by the way, must be a very ancient feature in Eastern houses, for the ancient Jews were told, "When thou

buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence."[1]

The site of the house of Dorcas or Tabitha, "the Gazelle," three-quarters of a mile east of the town, is another of the sights of Joppa, but though the tradition respecting it is ancient, no reliance can be placed on it. Assuredly, however, if the state of the poorer classes in the town 2,000 years ago were as bad as it is now, she must have had room enough for her charity. Extreme poverty is a characteristic of large numbers in all Eastern cities, and if we may judge by the appearance of the lower class in Joppa they are no exception to the rule.

Joppa used to be surrounded by a wall, which, however, only dated from the close of last century, at which period the town was rebuilt, after having been almost entirely destroyed in the fifteenth century. The wall was commenced by the English and finished by the Turks; but it has now been levelled and its place occupied by buildings; the ditch being filled up. The original land-gate was a comparatively large structure, and had an open space before it, in which the Governor or Cadi with his suite still occasionally tries cases, with swift Oriental decision, as was the custom with the ancient Jews. Thus, they were not to "oppress the afflicted in the gate"[2] by false witness before the judge, or other means. Job asseverates that he had never lifted up his hand against the fatherless because he saw his help in the gate,[3] as if he deprecated the idea of ever having overawed the judge by the number of his retainers.

On the south of the town lay formerly "the Moon Pool," where the rafts of cedar and other timber for the Temple at Jerusalem were brought by the Phœnicians[4] in

[1] Deut. xxii. 8. [2] Prov. xxii. 22. [3] Job xxxi. 21. [4] 2 Chron. ii. 16.

Solomon's day; and afterwards, for the second Temple, in the days of Ezra.[1] Jerusalem is twelve hours' journey from Joppa, at the pace of a horse's walk over rough ground, and it must have been a terrible matter to drag up huge beams over such a track. The enforced labour of thousands, so tyrannically used by the Jewish king, must have been required to get them pulled, step by step, to their destination; the remembrance of the hideous sufferings of such a task probably helping to bring about the revolt of the Ten Tribes under his successor.[2] The Moon Pool at Joppa has, however, long been silted up by the current which sweeps along the coast of Palestine from the south, carrying with it sand and Nile mud. Pelusium, Joppa, Ascalon, Sidon, and Tyre have all been destroyed as ports, in the course of ages, from this cause, and Alexandria would have shared the same fate had not the genius of its founder guarded against the danger by choosing a site to the west of the mouths of the great Egyptian river.

It was from Joppa that the prophet Jonah sought to flee from his duty by taking passage in a great Phœnician ship bound for Tarshish: apparently the district round Cadiz, in Spain. Strangely, there is a record in Pliny's "Natural History"[3] of bones of a sea-monster sent from Joppa to Rome by Marcus Scaurus, the younger, who was employed in Judæa by Pompey. They measured forty feet in length, and were greater in the span of the ribs than that of the Indian elephant, while the back-bone was a foot and a half in diameter. Naturally, in simple eyes, these remains were supposed to be those of the very "fish" mentioned in the story of the prophet, but they at least show that sea-beasts of huge

[1] Ezra iii. 7. [2] 2 Chron. x. 4; 1 Kings v. 13.
[3] Plin. *Nat. Hist.*, ix. 5.

size have not been unknown in the Mediterranean in any age.[1]

The history of Joppa has been stirring enough in past ages. When Joshua mapped out the land to Israel, it was assigned to the tribe of Dan,[2] but they could not wrest it from its Phœnician inhabitants. It first became Jewish under the Maccabees, in the second century before Christ. A number of Hebrews had settled in it, and from some cause had incurred wide-spread popular hatred, which took a terrible way of asserting itself. "The men of Joppa prayed the Jews that dwelt among them to go, with their wives and children, into the boats which they had prepared, as though they had meant them no hurt; but when they were gone forth into the deep, they drowned no less than two hundred of them."[3] Such an atrocity drew down the speedy vengeance of Judas Maccabæus. "Calling on the righteous Judge, he came against those murderers of his brethren, and burnt the haven by night, and set the boats on fire, and those that flew thither he slew."[4] It was Jonathan, the youngest of the Maccabæan brethren, however, who, with the help of his brother Simon, first actually gained the town for the Jews[5]—B.C. 147. Pompey, eighty-four years later, added Joppa to the Roman province of Syria, but Augustus gave it back, after the fall of Antony and Cleopatra—B.C. 30—to Herod the Great, so that it became once more Jewish, and it was held by his son Archelaus till he was deposed and banished, A.D. 6—that is, when our Lord was about ten years of age. Under Vespasian it suffered terribly; its population having largely turned pirates. It was, in fact, virtually destroyed. Since then its fortunes

[1] Sepp, *Jerusalem und das Heilige Land*, vol. i. 4, gives a number of instances. Many also are quoted by Dr. Pusey in his *Minor Prophets*.

[2] Josh. xix. 46. [3] 2 Macc. xii. 3, 4. [4] 2 Macc. xii. 6. [5] 1 Macc. x. 76.

have been various: now Roman, next Saracen, next under the Crusaders, then under the Mamelukes, and next under the Turks, to whom it still, to its misfortune, belongs. The population at this time is given by some authorities at 15,000,[1] by others at only 8,000,[2] of whom 500 are Europeans and 3,000 Jews.

On the south-east of the town a settlement of the Universal Israelitish Alliance has been able to obtain a tract of 780 acres, one-third of which, before unreclaimed, they have turned into fruitful fields and gardens. Their vineyards and those of others skirt the orchards on the south; the vines trailing low over the sand, but yielding large and delicious grapes. On the north there are large gardens owned by the Franciscans, and bordering these, also, are vineyards owned by a German colony. A settlement of Egyptians, brought there fifty years ago by Ibrahim Pasha, live in great wretchedness in low mud cabins along the shore to the north: a herd of poor creatures stranded here, when the tide of war that had swept them from their native land finally ebbed. But war has a still more vivid memento to show, close to the town, for a spot is still pointed out on the sand-hills to the south-east where Napoleon I. caused between two and three thousand Turkish soldiers to be shot down in cold blood, to save him the trouble of taking them with him to Egypt.

[1] Riehm, *Handwörterbuch* and *Calwer Bibel Lex.*
[2] *Palestine Fund Memoirs*, ii. 255; *Pict. Palestine*, ii. 138.

CHAPTER II.

LYDDAH—RAMLEH.

If you like an "omnibus," with its load of passengers, you can drive each day from Joppa to Jerusalem, but I prefer going on horseback. One can stop when he likes, and can escape the din of a light-hearted set of tourists "doing" the country in a very mechanical way.

The road to Lydda, now called Ludd, leaves Joppa at the north-east corner of the town and runs south-east, along a broad, sandy road, through gardens fenced with prickly pear, which extend nearly two miles back from the sea. On the left, half a mile out, in one of the gardens, is a good-sized pool, a pleasant sight in this thirsty land, and a little farther on, at a fork of the road, stands a noble fountain, called after a governor of Joppa who died about the beginning of this century, and left this fine memorial of his kindly nature. It is built of white stone, with an arched recess in the middle, before which, on a line with the walls, is a wide trough, at which some poor donkeys, heavily laden as usual, were slaking their thirst. A wall a little broader than the recess extends on each side of this, with a rounded shaft at each corner, surmounted by a sugar-loafed dome, the sides running back so as to form a parallelogram. In each end is a blank arch, for ornament; and in the front, on each side of the archway, about eight feet up, two long, narrow, arched window-spaces. A number of sugar-loaf domes above

complete the ornaments of the structure, which is the finest of its kind in Palestine. The walls are about twenty feet high; the centre cupola perhaps twelve feet higher. Inside lies the generous founder; for the building is at once a fountain and a tomb. No public gift is more appreciated in the East than a fountain, erected in the belief that kindness shown by us in this world will not be forgotten in the next, and hence there is not a town of any size which does not boast of at least one. One at Joppa, which I had forgotten to mention, stands near the old site of the city gate: eight pointed arches, resting on columns rising on a paved square, amidst a thoroughly Oriental surrounding of squalid stalls and dark cells, miscalled shops; some plane-trees growing beside it. At the roadside, in different parts, one often comes on a low plastered cube with an opening in front, and water within, placed there, each day, by women returning from the well, that passers-by may be refreshed by it. The water supply of Palestine, except in favoured districts, has in all ages been limited, and of course there has never been any such provision as there is with us for bringing it to each house. Hence, as in Jerusalem at this time, at least one cistern is formed under each dwelling, to collect the rain-water from the roof. A well in the inner court of a house was in ancient times, as it is still, a mark of wealth,[1] though it might be only a gathering of rain-water—not a spring. Mesa, of Moab, in the famous stone on which he caused his memorial of victory to be engraved, tells us that he had ordered every householder in Korcha Dibon to make a cistern in his own dwelling; and this custom, thus followed in all ages with private houses, has also been that of the whole open country. The ground everywhere is, as it were, honey-

[1] 2 Sam. xvii. 18; Jer. xxxviii. 6; Isa. xxxvi. 16; Prov. v. 15.

combed with ancient cisterns, many, no doubt, dating from the time of the old Canaanites, before Moses, for their wells, or cisterns,[1] are spoken of by him, and in a later day by the Levites, at Ezra's great fast.[2] These reservoirs must sometimes have been of great size, for in the well or cistern made by King Asa at Mizpeh there was room for seventy corpses.[3] Even in the very region through which we are passing—the fringe of low hills and the rolling plain of Sharon, stretching from Joppa, north—King Uzziah had to expend much labour in securing sufficient water for his numerous flocks. We read that "he built towers in the pasture country [for his shepherds and flocks] and hewed out many cisterns; for he had much cattle, both in the Shephelah [the low hills sloping to the plains] and in the Mishor" [the smooth grassy pasture-land, free from rocks and stones].[4] Their shape is often that of huge bottles, narrowed at the neck to keep the water cool. Stones were generally laid round the mouth, which itself was covered with a great stone, requiring no little strength to push or roll aside. Thus several men were required to move the one which covered the cistern belonging to Laban.[5] In some places, as we shall see, these cisterns are carefully hewn out of the rock, but they are sometimes walled with blocks of stones, and in all cases they are coated with water-proof cement. Springs rise to the surface only in a few localities in Palestine; indeed, in the south there may be said to be none. In Jerusalem there is but one, although there are at least four wells of living water, more or less sewage-poisoned. Bethlehem, even in Jerome's day, was mainly dependent on cisterns,[6] and the two fortresses, Jotapata and Masada, had only rain-cisterns.[7]

The fountain of Abu Nabât, which has led to this

[1] Deut. vi. 11. [2] Neh. ix. 25. [3] Jer. xli. 9. [4] 2 Chron. xxvi. 10.
[5] Gen. xxix. 3. [6] Hieron. on *Amos*, iv. 7. [7] Jos. *Ant.*, xiv. 14, 6.

digression, is known by the name of the Tomb of Tabitha or Dorcas, but there is no weight in the tradition which thus distinguishes it. Close to it, among the orchards stretching to the north, M. Clermont Ganneau was fortunate enough to discover, in 1874, the ancient cemetery of Joppa, containing many rock-hewn tombs, all long since empty. Lamps and vases of terra-cotta, and stones with inscriptions, are constantly found in its limits by the peasantry, to whom the larger blocks are quite a treasure for building purposes.

Branching off to the south-east, through the grounds of the Jewish Agricultural Colony, the road passes the first of a series of four guard-houses on the nine miles between Joppa and Ramleh—a sad evidence of the insecurity of the land under Turkish rule. On the left hand is Yazur, a small mud village standing amidst gardens, and said to have once had a church. The telegraph wire to Jerusalem runs alongside the road, on the right. Behind Yazur, about a mile north-east, lies a similar village, called Ibn Ibrak, thought to be Bene Berak, of the tribe of Dan.[1] Near this, during winter, rain-water stands in pools at different points. Slanting to the left, beyond Yazur, the road leads on towards Ludd, the Lydda of the New Testament, passing on the way, amidst olive-trees round and near it, the village of Beit Dejan, the Beth Dagon of the tribe of Judah,[2] famous, as the name implies, in the days of the Philistines for the local worship of their great fish-god Dagon. That people would seem, therefore, at some time, to have occupied the lowlands as far north as this. A mile and a half farther off, to the north, still on the plain, is Kefr Ana, that is, the village of Ana, a name thought, by Robinson,[3] to show that the triangle of plain between Joppa, Lydda, and a clump of low hills rising to

[1] Josh. xix. 46. [2] Josh. xv. 41. [3] *Bib. Res. App.*, pp. 120, 121.

the east of Joppa, like an island in the level round them, was the part known in Scripture as the Plain of Ono,[1] but also, apparently, as "the Craftsmen's Plain."[2] Ono itself was a Benjamite town, somewhere near Lydda, and always mentioned in connection with it, so that Ana would suit in this particular, though there is the difficulty that the Talmud says Ono was three miles from Lydda, whereas this place is five. But the site of the present village may have changed to this extent in the troubled history of the country. Two shallow basins, hollowed out in the rock, not built, receive the winter rains, and there are several wells, from which a few gardens on one side of the village are irrigated. You go nowhere in Palestine without meeting ruins, and here, beside the wells, ancient shafts of pillars speak of glory passed away. A mile beyond Ono, or Ana, still to the north-east, is another collection of mud huts—the village of El-Yehudiyeh, thought by Robinson to be Jehud of Dan.[3] It is twice the size of Ana, having a population of from 800 to 1,000, and it boasts of some gardens on its north side. Midway between it and Ana, moreover, there is a tract of gardens, about half a mile broad, and extending more than a mile, to the foot of the isolated low hills on the north. A rain-pond, surrounded by palms, lies a little south of the village, within mud-banks renewed each winter. The patriarch Judah is said by the Samaritans to have been buried here. Two miles still further, in the same line as El Yehudiyeh, the village of Rantieh, a very small place, was visible: a spot noticeable from its having been thought by Dr. Robinson to be the site of Arimathæa, famous in Gospel history. But the identification is very doubtful, for "Arimathæa" is only a

[1] 1 Chron. viii. 12; Neh. vi. 2.
[2] Neh. xi. 35; 1 Chron. iv. 14.
[3] Josh. xix. 45.

variation of Ha Rama, "the Height,"[1] famous as the birth-place, home, and burial-place of the prophet Samuel,[2] and it is thither, rather than to Rantieh, we must look for the home of the illustrious disciple who craved and obtained the body of our Lord from Pilate. About a mile beyond Rantieh the slopes of the hills begin; their base covered with extensive olive-orchards.

As we rode on towards Lydda, the landscape, dotted with these villages, presented in a gradually receding sweep the great physical divisions of the country in this part. First came the broad plain, undulating in low waves towards the hills on the east. These rise in fertile slopes to a height of about 500 feet above the sea, and constitute the second district, known in the Bible as the Shephelah,[3] or "Low Lands": a region of soft white limestone hills, with broad ribbons of brown quartz running through them here and there. The wide straths leading up to the mountains, which form the third district, are especially fertile; the valleys waving with corn and the hill-sides covered with olive-trees, which flourish better in this district than in any other. Villages also are most frequent in this middle region, where there was some security on account of its elevation above the plain; and springs are found here and there, with wells of all dates. In former times the Shephelah must have been densely populated, for the Palestine Fund Surveyors sometimes discovered in it as many as three ancient sites within two square miles.

[1] In the Septuagint it is Aramathäim, from Ramathaim, "the Two Heights." In 1 Sam. i. 1, the Septuagint reads "of Ramathaim, a Zuphite."

[2] 1 Sam. i. 19; vii. 17; xxv. 1.

[3] The following are the texts in which it occurs, and its readings in the A.V.:—VALE, VALLEY, or VALLEYS: Deut. i. 7; Josh. ix. 1; x. 40; xi. 2, 16; xii. 8; xv. 33; Judg. i. 9; 1 Kings x. 27; 2 Chron. i. 15. LOW PLAINS: 1 Chron. xxvii. 28; 2 Chron. ix. 27. LOW COUNTRY: 2 Chron. xxvi. 10; xxviii. 18. PLAIN: Jer. xvii. 26; Obad. xix.; Zech. vii. 7.

But we must hurry on towards Lydda, for its wide gardens now lie before us as we cross the low spur on which stand the mud hovels of another village, with a nice sprinkling of olive-trees above it, on the slope to the south. For more than a mile before we reach the town, the road is skirted with orchards and gardens surrounding it on all sides except the east, which is close to the hills. Most of these gardens have wells of their own, which accounts for their vigour and fruitfulness.

Lydda is famous as the reputed place of the birth and burial of the patron saint of England, St. George. He is said to have suffered martyrdom in Nicomedia, the capital of ancient Bithynia, from which his remains were, it is averred, carried to his native town, where his head is still thought to lie below the altar of the church consecrated to him. That he was a real personage there can be no doubt, and that he did noble service in his day can hardly be questioned, from the earliness of his fame, and the honour in which he has always been held by both the Eastern and the Western Church. But it is a lesson on the vanity of human greatness to find that, like so many heroes famous in their day, he is now no more than a name to the world at large. A fine church, which dates from about A.D. 1150, still exists in Lydda, with a crypt containing what is called St. George's Tomb. One arch is still complete, and the side of a larger one, but the outer, smoothed stones have either fallen, or been carried off, from the wall connecting these shattered remains of what must once have been a splendid building. The nave and north aisle have, however, been partly rebuilt, and are used as a Greek church; two lines of columns having been restored. The rest of the site is used as the court of a mosque! When perfect, the total length of the church was 150 feet, and it was 79 feet broad. A chapel of St. James, standing to

the south of the church, is now the mosque, the court of which covers, moreover, two-thirds of the whole site. But, compared with the splendid building of the Crusaders, the Mahommedan sanctuary is rude and squalid in the extreme : a fit contrast between the creeds they respectively represent. How much may lie buried under the ruins! Twenty years ago thirty coffins and a fine sarcophagus were discovered by some chance digging, but all the bodies were headless![1] The church is at the south-west of the town, and is built of pale yellow stone, from quarries on the way to Jerusalem.

The population of Lydda in 1851, the date of the last report, was 1,345, but with the villages of the district round, united with it in official arrangements, was 4,400. Its present squalor and decay are a sad contrast to its former prosperity, of which one is often reminded by the remains of fine buildings still seen among its miserable mud hovels. There used to be large soap factories, but they are no longer in existence.

It was perhaps by the Roman road to Lydda that St. Paul was brought from Jerusalem on his way to Cæsarea, A.D. 58 ;[2] but there had been a Christian community there long before he passed through as a prisoner, for St. Peter "came down to the saints that were at Lydda," and healed the paralytic Æneas,[3] and he went from it to Joppa, at the invitation of the Christians in that town, when the generous-hearted Dorcas fell sick and died,[4] soon after the conversion of St. Paul, about the year A.D. 35, nearly six years after the crucifixion of our Lord.[5]

The ride from Lydda to Ramleh is through orchards

[1] *Pal. Memoirs*, ii. 268.
[2] Riehm : art. *Paulus*.
[3] Acts ix. 32.
[4] Acts ix. 38.
[5] It is to be remembered that Christ was born four years before our Anno Domini 1.

of olives, pomegranates, apricots, almonds, and other fruit-trees, with mulberries and sycamores varying the picture. The two places are a little more than two miles apart, Ramleh lying to the south-west; but the two oases of verdure round them, so striking in the great treeless plain, almost meet. In the spring every open space glows with scarlet anemones, intermixed with clouds of ranunculus, saffron, and other wild flowers, tall reeds of long grass fringing every moist hollow. Its name, Ramleh—"the Sandy"—indicates the character of the soil on which it stands; but though sandy, it is fertile. To the south indeed, towards Ekron, the sand is deep, and makes cultivation difficult, but even there olive-yards and gardens flourish, thanks to irrigation from the numerous wells. Both Ramleh and Lydda are embayed among the low hills of the Shephelah on all sides but the north; Ramleh standing on the east side of a broad, low swell. Though the larger place of the two, it has no such charm of antiquity as its neighbour, since it was founded only in the eighth century, when Lydda had been temporarily destroyed. Many large vaulted cisterns and other remains, on all sides except the south, where the hills are close, show that it must once have been much larger than it is; but it could never have supported a very large community, the only water supply being derived from wells and tanks for rain. Some of these, of great size, but now useless, still show their age by inscriptions on them in Cufic, or early Arabic. Two ruins in the town are its chief attraction: an ancient Crusading church, long ago turned into a Moslem sanctuary, and a lofty tower known as the White Mosque, to the west of the houses. The former, still in comparatively good repair, with what was apparently its original roof, is no less than 150 feet long and 75 feet broad, almost the same size as the Church of St.

George at Lydda; but the whole interior has been white-washed, so that the fine carving of the pillars is in great part concealed. That two churches of such size and splendour should have been built by the Crusaders so near each other is a triumph of Western energy at once emphatic and eloquent. What men they must have been who raised them in such a land, and such an age, far from the aids of civilisation! The one at Ramleh is perhaps the finest and best-preserved memorial of Crusading architecture in Palestine.

In a large enclosure, about 300 feet one way and 280 the other, stands the White Tower, twenty-six feet square at its base, and 120 feet high, a marvel of beautiful masonry. It is said to be the minaret of a great mosque, now destroyed; but it looks much more like the gigantic square tower of a ruined church. Yet we have the weighty opinion of the officers of the Palestine Survey that the details show the whole edifice to have been built by Arab workmen, from the designs of a European architect. It seems to date from about the year A.D. 1300. In the enclosure, south of the tower, are four huge vaults, lighted from above, all dry and perfect, the two largest eighty feet from north to south and a little less from east to west; the other two not much smaller. One of the four is full of stones, the memorials of pilgrims who each add one to the huge mass. The vaults are all about twenty-five feet deep; their roofs being supported by rows of stone columns. Along the east and south of the enclosure are remains of an arcade or colonnade; and traces of chambers, for the officials of the mosque, are visible on the west side. The past history of the spot is, however, unknown. Tall slender buttresses rise at the four corners to more than half the height of the tower, which narrows in size above them in its two succeeding storeys; a stair-

case of 126 steps winding inside the otherwise solid masonry to the gallery at the top. The huge mass has doubtless often been roughly shaken by earthquakes, but it stands unrent as yet. A succession of windows of various shapes, but all with pointed arches, relieves the four sides, and opens magnificent views in every direction as you ascend. At one time a round tower and balcony for a muezzin disfigured the summit, but they have now disappeared. Standing on ground 352 feet above the sea, and rising 120 feet higher, the gallery enables one to look out from a height of nearly 500 feet on the panorama around.

Turning to the north, the eye wanders over the cemetery of Ramleh, with its plaster headstones and lowly mounds, scattered without order, and too often in decay—the orchards and cactus-hedges beyond, and then the town of Lydda, with its flat roofs in varied outline, and the high campanile-like minaret, with the ruined aisle of St. George's Church, close by a broad pool. On the further side, edged to the north with reeds and trees, there stretches out the whole length of the plain of Sharon, as far as Carmel, and, from west to east, its whole breadth, from the sea-shore sand-hills to the mountains of Judæa and Samaria. The landscape thus displayed includes by far the largest sweep of open country in Palestine, reaching from the cliffs of Carmel to the wells of Beersheba. Rolling uplands diversify the surface throughout; great breadths of waving pasture or arable land stretching between the low heights which break and beautify the whole. Perennial streams cleave their way to the sea; villages, always picturesque, however wretched, rise on the slopes; in some places there is still a sprinkling of oak; everywhere there are ruins. The red or black tilth, the green or yellow grain, the light-brown uplands, the tawny fringe of sand along the shore,

the blue sea, the purple mountains to the east, all seen through the transparent air, make up a scene never to be forgotten.

Such a view as this explains why the Jews could not permanently gain possession of these rich lowlands, but had to content themselves with the comparatively barren hills. The nations of ancient Palestine were strong in iron chariots; the Jews were infantry soldiers, without horses till the days of Solomon. Jabin, the Canaanite potentate in the north of the land, boasted of 900 chariots[1] in the early days of the Judges, and centuries later the King of Damascus explained a defeat by saying that the Hebrew gods "are gods of the mountains, and therefore they are stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plains, and surely we shall be stronger than they."[2] Roads fit for wheels are even yet unknown in the old Jewish territory. You can only travel at the rate of your horse's walk over the stony tracks through the hills, everywhere in a state of nature. It was on a Roman highway that the Ethiopian eunuch travelled to Gaza, and though there were chariots of the sun in Jerusalem in the times of the Hebrew kings, they were only used for local religious pageants close to the city. Solomon, indeed, had 1,400 chariots, but they were, doubtless, more for show than use, except on the short stretches of road he is said to have made to some distance from the capital. There was, in fact, no plain on which they could be freely used, either for war or for travelling, except Esdraelon, where we find Jehu and Ahab driving in theirs.[3] An Egyptian papyrus, dating from the fourteenth century before Christ, that is, from about the time of Joshua, gives an account of the journey of an officer of the Pharaoh—a "Mohar"—sent in his chariot through Palestine upon

[1] Judg. iv. 3. [2] 1 Kings xx. 25. [3] 1 Kings xviii. 44; 2 Kings ix. 16.

official business. As long as he kept to the plains, he tells us, he could move freely, but when he ascended to the hills, the tracks were rocky and overgrown with prickly pear, trees, and bushes; and disaster followed disaster. His "limbs were knocked up, his bones broken, his strength gone, so that for very weariness he fell asleep." He had to cross streams by difficult fords; to descend ravines "two thousand cubits deep," full of rocks and rolling stones, with no apparent passage; on one side a precipice, on the other the mountain. His chariot-pole was broken, his chariot injured; his horses refused to go, and at last his chariot was broken to pieces, and could only be repaired by getting the services of different "workmen in wood, and metals, and leather."[1] Such as the roads were then they still continue, and they must have been the same, in the hills, during Bible times, for the fact of Solomon having made travelling easy, by better roads, in the vicinity of Jerusalem, would not have been mentioned had intercommunication generally been even passably good.[2] To face the iron chariots of the plains was impossible for the Hebrew militia. "The Lord was with Judah; and he drave out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley [or plain] because they had chariots of iron."[3] In his mountain campaign at Ai and Gibeon, Joshua had only footmen to resist. On the plains of Merom, in the north, horses and chariots, "very many," appeared for the first time on the scene. A sudden surprise, like that of Deborah when she fell upon Sisera, neutralised this advantage of the enemy, but it was ordered that the horses should be houghed and the chariots burned,

[1] *Records of the Past*, ii. 109—116.

[2] Jos. *Ant.*, viii. 7, 4. The roads of Josephus seem to have been made of basalt, the contrast of which with the white hills would be striking.

[3] Judg. i. 19; Josh. xvii. 16.

to prevent, in future, the peril of such a force as had thus been so wonderfully overcome. Nor was there any desire for such innovations, for horses and chariots were as useless in the simple life of the mountains as they would be to-day; no wheeled vehicle ever being met with in the hills, and horses only as they pass with stray travellers from town to town, or, in numbers, from the Damascus horse-market to that of Egypt, the caravan road between which two points, by the way, passes through Ramleh.

CHAPTER III.

THE PLAIN OF SHARON.

A MODERN paved road, in very bad repair, leads through Ramleh, from Joppa to Jerusalem, but the ancient road between these cities runs through Lydda; only a broad track, however, without traces of antiquities, being visible as you cross the plain. From Lydda, north, runs an old Roman road through the heart of the country; a side track branching off to Cæsarea. Along this, as has already been said,[1] St. Paul probably travelled, when led to the presence of Felix, the procurator, or governor, of Judæa. Following this course, a short ride brought me through Lydda, which you leave by a Saracenic bridge over a wady, or water-course, dry except after heavy rains. The ground was firm, not like the deep sand through which one has to pass outside Joppa. Sharon spread in soft undulations far and near, with the low hills of the Shephelah on the left, at a short distance; fertile stretches of barley and wheat now, in spring, casting a shimmer of green over the landscape, and alternating with breadths of what, in England, would be called pasturage. Red and yellow flowers—anemones, tulips, and the narcissus, among other blossoms—abounded. The joyful peasant maiden could say to-day, as of old, "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys."[2] What flowers were meant in this verse it is not easy to tell. The Rose of Sharon is thought by Sir George Grove, I know not why,

[1] See *ante*, p. 32. [2] Cant. ii. 1.

to have been the "tall and graceful squill,"[1] while others have advocated the claims of the cistus, or rock rose, but this is found rather in the hills than on the plains. The rose, indeed, is not mentioned till the date of the Apocryphal books, having been brought from Persia late in Jewish history.[2] Tristram and Houghton[3] think it was the narcissus, a bulb of which Orientals are passionately fond.[4] While it is in flower it is sold everywhere in the streets, and may be seen in the hands of very many, both men and women, who carry it about to enjoy its perfume. Dr. Thomson thinks a beautiful variety of the marsh mallow, which grows into a stout bush and bears thousands of beautiful flowers, is the "lily" of Scripture. It certainly is found often among thorns, and abounds on Sharon, so that it would, at least in this, suit the comparison that follows the mention of the Rose of Sharon—"As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters."[5] But it hardly meets the conditions implied in other texts, for it is compared with the lips of the Beloved, and therefore, it is to be presumed, was red.[6] It grew quickly, and from the locality in which our Lord contrasted its "glory" with that of Solomon, it should be found abundantly in Galilee. The species mentioned by Dr. Thomson, however, though very beautiful, is dark purple and white in its flower, nor, indeed, is it a lily at all, but an iris. There are, in fact, few true lilies in Palestine, nor is it necessary to suppose that a true lily was intended, for the name Shusan—translated "lily" in Scripture—is used to this day of any bright-coloured flower at all like the lily: such, for example, as the tulip, anemone, or ranunculus. Dr. Tristram, therefore, fixes on the scarlet anemone, which colours the

[1] *Dict. of Bible:* art. "Sharon."
[2] Ecclus. xxiv. 14; xxxix. 13; l. 8.
[3] *Dict. of Bible:* art. "Rose."
[4] *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 476.
[5] Cant. ii. 2.
[6] Cant. v. 13; Hos. xiv. 5.

ground all over Palestine in spring, as the flower intended, especially as the name Shusan is applied to it among others.[1] Captain Conder thinks the blue iris is meant, while the large yellow water-lily of the Huleh is mentioned by Dean Stanley, only to be set aside.[2] But whatever the case with the lily, there seems no likelihood of agreement as to the "Rose of Sharon." The Hebrew word translated "rose" comes from two roots, meaning "sour" and "bulb," and is used also, in the ancient Syriac version, for an autumnal flower springing from a poisonous bulb, and of a white and violet colour; perhaps the meadow saffron.[3] On the other hand, the old Jewish commentaries translate the word by "the narcissus," which is not only of the lily tribe, but very common, as we have seen, in spring, on the plain of Sharon. Roses are not found in Palestine, though they flourish on the cool heights of Hermon, 6,000 feet above the sea. It is not without weight, moreover, that the word used for "rose" in Scripture is still used by the peasantry, with slight variation, for the narcissus.[4]

As we rode on, many peasants were ploughing, with the plough in one hand, and in the other a long wooden goad, the sharp iron point of which was used to urge forward the lean, small oxen. It was no use for them to kick against it;[5] their only safety was to hurry on. The plough used was so light that it could be carried on the shoulder; indeed, asses passed carrying two ploughs and much besides. A rough upright of wood, with a second

[1] Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 464; So, Van Lennep, *Bible Lands*, p. 166.

[2] *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 422.

[3] Gesenius, *Zu Jes.*, xxxv. 1. The roots given in the text appear in the last edition of Gesenius's *Lexicon*. Capt. Conder gives another, but it is the root of only half of the word.

[4] See Capt. Conder, *Pal. Fund Rep.*, 1878, p. 46.

[5] Acts xxvi. 14.

piece fixed horizontally at the bottom, to hold the flat spear-head-like coulter, formed the whole implement, which could only make furrows a few inches deep. Ravens and wild doves flew hither and thither. Herds of sheep were feeding on the thin pasture, but cattle were rare. The sheep had great broad tails, and thus seemed to be the same breed as that reared by the ancient Jews, for we read that the tail of their variety was burned by the priests on the altar, in thank-offerings. "The whole rump [or tail] shall be taken off, hard by the backbone, and the priest shall burn it upon the altar."[1] On the roofs of many of the mud houses grass had sprung up plentifully, thanks to the winter rain, but in the increasing heat it was doomed to "wither before it grew up."[2] On every side the landscape was delightful. "The winter was past, the rain over and gone; the flowers were appearing on the earth; the time of the singing of birds had come, and the voice of the turtle was heard in the land; the fig-tree was putting forth her green figs, and the vines, now in bloom, gave a good smell."[3] Not that song-birds were to be heard, except the lark; there was not enough woodland for them; nor that the turtle was to be heard on the plain, or the fragrance of vineyards inhaled. These were the attractions of rare and isolated spots, beside the villages, on the hill-slopes. The plain itself is silent, and shows very little life of any kind.

Tibneh, perhaps the burial-place of Joshua, lies among the mountains north-east of Lydda, and as I could never be nearer to it, the heads of our horses had been turned in its direction. At three miles from Lydda we reached the hills, the village of Beit Nebala, probably the Neballat of Nehemiah,[4] lying at the foot of slopes surrounded by wide

[1] Lev. iii. 9, 11. [2] Ps. cxxix. 5; 2 Kings xix. 26; Isa. xxxvii. 27.
[3] Cant. ii. 11—13. [4] Neh. xi. 34.

stretches of olive-trees. The sea, thirteen miles due east, was only 250 feet below us, so slowly does the land rise thus far. Small valleys, each a water-course after rains, converged in all directions on Beit Nebala, and a mile from it we passed an underground cistern. Two miles farther, still ascending between hill-sides beautiful with olives, we passed Kibbieh, a very small hamlet, 840 feet above the sea, perhaps the site of Gibbethon of Dan. Still rising, the road turns to the south-east, at the small village of Shukba, but, after about a mile, mounts again, up Wady Artabbah, amidst thousands of olive and other fruit-trees on every slope, but especially on those towards the south-east.

About five miles nearly south of Shukba, across hills rich in olives, we pass the village of Midieh, famous in its day, for it seems beyond question to stand on the site of the ancient Modin,[1] the birth-place of the illustrious brotherhood of Maccabees, and the place where they were buried. Soba, a village lying on a lofty conical hill, west of Jerusalem, twenty-five miles from the sea, and more than fifteen from Lydda, was at one time supposed to be entitled to this double honour; but it meets none of the requirements of the known position of Modin, which may be said also of Latrun, on the road from Ramleh to Jerusalem, a village thought at a later time to have been the Maccabæan cradle.[2] So long ago as the fifteenth century, indeed, it was accepted as the "Town of the Maccabees" by the Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem, and a "Church of the Maccabæan Brothers" was built near it even earlier. In the year 1866, however, a German traveller proposed

[1] Schenkel, *Bib. Lex.*, iv. 233; Riehm, p. 1019; 1 Macc. ii. 1.

[2] Dr. Porter in Kitto's *Cyclop. Bib. Lit.*: art. "Modin." *Land and Book*, p. 535. Robinson, *Pal.*, iii. 30, thinks that Latrun may possibly be Modin.

the small mountain village of Midieh as the true site, and its claims have been very generally recognised from that time. It lies six miles east of Lydda, on the top of a hill, separated from the hills around, on three sides, by valleys. Some mud and stone houses, with a population of about 150 persons in all; their water supplied by rain-cisterns; a small olive-grove below the village, on the north; a high conical knoll swelling up from the top of the hill, with traces of ruins, and a small Mahommedan shrine, with a few trees round it; the sides of the knoll sloping as if artificially cut, and showing some rock-hewn tombs; a rain-tank farther down the slope, with cisterns above it, make up the place. On a height over against it lie three mounds of ruins and a number of tombs, but these do not correspond to the requirements of the Maccabæan sepulchre. Guérin, however, found ruins which appear to be those of the famous burial-place, on the top of a hill close to the village, on the north side. Rising more than 700 feet above the plain below, the hill commands a view of the sea, which is one condition required of the true site.[1] The foundation walls of a great rectangular building were, moreover, discovered by digging, with cells for burial inside, hewn in the native rock; some bones being found in them! A German architect, Mauss, has even made out the burial-spaces in these tombs as exactly seven, the number in the Maccabæan sepulchre. Sockets hewn in the rock show, still further, the spots on which pyramids connected with the original structure, mentioned in the First Book of the Maccabees, rested, and there are even fragments of them lying round.

This, then, apparently beyond question, is the spot on which Simon, the last survivor of the glorious brotherhood, raised a grand tomb over the bodies of his father,

[1] 1 Macc. xiii. 29.

mother, and four brothers, reserving a space in it for himself—the seventh. A pyramid richly carved was raised for each of them, on an under-structure of squared polished stone; other great obelisks, covered with carved emblems of the naval and military triumphs of the family, adorning the whole above.[1] Never heroes deserved more truly a grand memorial. Their story still thrills the heart, for valour and genius must ever command the homage of mankind.

The olive-groves on the way to Tibneh must be favourite haunts of the turtle-dove, which comes with the spring,[2] but had not reached Palestine when I was in this neighbourhood. Later on, they are found everywhere, and pour out their plaintive cooings in every garden, grove, and wooded hill, from sunrise to sunset; the time of their arrival being so regular that the prophet could speak of it as known to everyone.[3] The turtle-dove is more numerous in the Holy Land than anywhere else, and thus, as well as the "dove," naturally became a source of Scripture metaphor. It is mentioned more than fifty times in the Bible. Alone among birds it could be offered on the altar.[4] Two turtle-doves, or two young pigeons, were enjoined as the offering at the purification of the leper, and they were accepted by the law, from the poor, as a burnt-offering, or sin-offering, in other cases. The Nazarite who had accidentally defiled himself was to be thus purified, and so also were women after the birth of a child[5] if they could not give anything more costly. The offering of the Virgin in the Temple, after the birth of our Lord, was

[1] 1 Macc. xiii. 27—30. Guérin, *Descr. de la Palestine: Samarie*, ii. 55—64, 404—426. The identification is questioned by the Palestine Surveyors, who think the monument is Christian, dating from the fourth or fifth century.

[2] Cant. ii. 11, 12.

[3] Jer. viii. 7.

[4] Lev. i. 14; xv. 14, 29; xiv. 22; Num. vi. 10.

[5] Lev. v. 7; xii. 8.

on this ground mentioned by the Evangelist, as a sign of her poverty.[1] A turtle-dove and a young pigeon were among the offerings in the sacrifices of Abraham;[2] so early had these birds been accepted as a symbol of purity. "Turtle-dove" was, indeed, a term of endearment, as when David cries to God, "O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the multitude of the wicked."[3] Many of the passages, however, usually supposed to refer to the turtle-dove, are rather to be applied to doves or pigeons at large. I have quoted all the texts specially naming it; elsewhere "doves" includes the many varieties of pigeon found in Palestine, especially the common pigeons of the towns or villages, which, like all their kind, except the turtle-dove, never migrate. Every house, except perhaps the very poorest, has its pigeons. A detached dovecot of mud or brick, roofed over, with wide-mouthed earthen pots inside, as nesting-boxes, is a special mark of wealth; but even the humble peasant has one on a small scale, in his little yard, or even in his house, against the inner wall; the birds flying out and in through the house-door. It was natural, therefore, for our Lord, amidst such familiarity with birds so guileless, to warn His apostles to be "harmless as doves."[4]

Such an allusion vividly reminds us of one great characteristic of the Bible. It is not the production of cloistered ascetics, but breathes in every page a joyous or meditative intercourse with nature and mankind. The fields, the hills, the highway, the valleys, the varying details of country scenes and occupations, are interspersed

[1] Luke ii. 24.

[2] Gen. xv. 9. There are two words in the Old Testament for these birds: one, "tor," for the turtle-dove; the other, "jonah," for all the varieties of pigeon which are spoken of as such, or as "doves."

[3] Ps. lxxiv. 19.

[4] Matt. x. 16. "Guileless," as opposed to the serpent, is rather the meaning.

among pictures of life from the crowded haunts of men. The sower and the seed; the birds of the air; the foxes; the hen and its brood; the lilies and roses; the voice of the turtle; the fragrance of the orchard; the blossom of the almond or vine; the swift deer; the strong eagle; the twittering sparrow; the lonely pelican; the stork returning with spring; planting, pruning, digging, and harvesting; the hiring of labourers; the toil of the fisherman; the playing of children; the sound of the mill; the lord and his servants; the merchantman; the courtier in silken robes; and a thousand other notices of life and nature, utilised to teach the highest lessons, give the sacred writings a perennial freshness and universal interest.

The ruins of Tibneh cover the slopes and crest of a hill surrounded on the north and east by a deep ravine. On the south the hill sinks, in terraces, to a valley formerly covered in part with houses, and marked by a magnificent evergreen oak, one of the finest in Palestine. Following this valley, the last slopes of a hill facing Tibneh are before us; their rocky sides revealing several tombs, the remains of an ancient necropolis. On the top of the height is a small Mussulman village, with several ancient cisterns, and a number of finely-cut stones of ancient masonry, built into the modern houses.

The tombs have been hewn out, at different levels, on the north slopes of the hill, eight being more noticeable than the rest. One, however, is much the most remarkable. Its oblong vestibule, cut in the rock, is supported by four pillars: two, at the side, half separated from the hill; the others, in the centre, entirely so. They have no capitals, and are ornamented at their tops only by a few simple mouldings. Immediately behind them, the face of the rock, forming the front wall of the tomb, is pierced by no fewer than 288 small openings, in eight rows; some

square, others triangular, but most half-circles, made in former days as recesses in which to place a burning lamp, in honour of the illustrious dead. At the right of this frontage of rock is the low and narrow entrance to the tomb, leading into a chamber, in the walls of which are fourteen excavations for as many occupants. On the south, facing the door, a broader entrance, cut through the rock, leads to the innermost chamber—the place of honour—and in this there is only a hollow for one corpse. It must have been the last resting-place of the chief of the pale assembly here gathered in their last home; the outer graves being those of his family.

Such a tomb must evidently have been designed for a very illustrious personage: the niches for lamps outside show, moreover, that it was recognised as such by long-past generations. "No one," writes Guérin, "who was not an object of public veneration can be fancied as held in so much honour, and who could this be but Joshua, at what is, seemingly, beyond doubt, Timnath-Serah?"[1]

The tomb shows marks of the highest antiquity, for it is similar to those made by the Canaanites before the arrival of the Hebrews in their country. Still more, the Abbé Richard states that in 1870 he found in the soil of its different sepulchral chambers numbers of flint knives, in agreement with the record that those used at the first circumcision at Gilgal were buried with Joshua.[2]

The identification of this spot with the tomb of Joshua

[1] Josh. xxiv. 26. M. Guérin goes into details of the identification.

[2] Sept. Josh. xxi. 42; xxiv 30. Guérin, *Descr. de la Palestine: Samarie*, ii. 100—102. Riehm, *Bib. Lex.:* art. "Tibneh." A high authority who disputes Guérin's conclusions, writes:—"The oldest Jewish tombs have no porches like that of Tibneh. It probably dates about the second century B.C. Of Canaanite tombs nothing is known. There is reason to suppose Canaanites did not bury, but burned, their dead."

is however disputed by Captain Conder, of the Palestine Survey,[1] who regards the village of Kefr Hâris, nine miles from Nablus, as the true site. We shall visit it at a later period, and leave its description till then. But it is at least striking to find that, besides the similarity of "Tibneh" and "Timnath," there is a village, about three miles to the east, called Kefr Ishua—Joshua's village—while a great oak-tree, near the tomb, is called Sheikh et Teim—"the Chief [who was] the Servant of God."

That a solitary tree, of a height so moderate to Western notions as forty feet, should be thus famous is due, apart from local traditions, to the entire absence of lofty trees in Western Palestine. The country may once have been wooded, as the region beyond Jordan now is, but, if so, its glory has long departed. The present comparatively waterless condition of the land marked it ages ago, for even before the invasion of the Hebrews wells and underground cisterns are both mentioned. The latter, indeed, are spoken of more than sixty times in the Old Testament,[2] and we meet with the word for a "well"[3] twenty-five times in the Pentateuch. Of the two words, on the other hand, used for "woods," the one much the more frequently found means, rather, the low thorny brushwood or scrub which covers many rocky and barren spots in the uplands of Palestine, known in Bible times as the "yaar." Such places are still called "waar" by the peasantry; the old name thus remaining almost unchanged. A traveller wishing to take a course which would lead him into ground so difficult, is warned from attempting it by the assurance that "waar" is before him, and happy is he if he accept the warning and avoid the tangle of gnarled under-

[1] *Pal. Fund Reports*, 1878, p. 22.

[2] See the word בּוֹר—the equivalent of cistern.

[3] בְּאֵר—"bëer."

growth, often armed with spines or prickles, and made more formidable by the chaos of loose rocks and stones amidst which it grows. It was in a "yaar" that Jonathan found the wild honey [1] oozing from some rocky cleft where the bees had stored it,[2] for the dry recesses of the limestone rocks of Palestine everywhere offer fitting places for laying up the comb. The battle in which Absalom was overthrown took place in the "yaar" of Ephraim,[3] and it is not difficult to imagine how, in such a stony, thorny labyrinth as a "yaar" presents, "the wood devoured more people that day than the sword." [3] True, there was at least one tree high enough to catch the hair of the false-hearted prince as he rode under it on his mule, but it is spoken of, each time it is mentioned, as "the" oak, as if it alone rose above the stunted jungle around. God threatens to make the vineyards and fig orchards of apostate Israel into a "yaar," [4] and Micah foretells that "Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house [of God] as the hilly yaar" [5]—a tangle of wilderness brakes.

Still, roots of trees which must have been of a goodly size are found, here and there, even in such stony, stunted, brush-forests, useful now only for charcoal-burning. But I question if ever there was much forest, in our sense, west of the Jordan since the historical period. The other word translated "wood" in Scripture [6] does not help us, for it comes from a root which may refer either to cutting down, or to being entangled or interwoven, which suits a thicket rather than an open forest. It is noteworthy that no trees are spoken of as obtained by Solomon from Palestine, but that cedar and cypress from Lebanon, and sandal-wood from the East, were imported from

[1] 1 Sam. xiv. 25—27.
[2] Deut. xxxii. 13; Ps. lxxxi. 16.
[3] 2 Sam. xviii. 6, 8. (East of Jordan.)
[4] Hosea ii. 12.
[5] Micah iii. 12; Jer. xxvi. 18.
[6] "Hōresh."

Phœnicia, or by its help.[1] In any case, the crowded population of Israel, hemmed up in the narrow limits of the hills, soon cleared away whatever wood there was, leaving the slopes free for the terrace cultivation necessary under their circumstances.

A Roman road by which possibly St. Paul was taken to Antipatris, on his way to Cæsarea, runs through Tibneh, and offers the easiest route to Sharon, though it is rough enough in its present condition. Olives and fir-trees dot the slopes on the way to Abud, a village 1,240 feet above the sea; but the route grows more wild and desolate as you advance. In six miles the descent is above 700 feet, through a region now very lonely, but marked from point to point with the ruins of ancient towns or villages. It was well to have even the rough track of the old road, for the wady north of us has only a footpath by which to descend a depth of 1,000 feet. As we emerged on the plain, the mud village of El-Yehudiyeh—perhaps Jehud of Dan[2]—with a rain-pond and a few palm-trees, lay to the south. Were houses built of as perishable materials, and as meanly, in ancient times in Palestine? The Jews had learned sun-brick-making in Egypt, and would naturally follow in their new country the modes familiar to them on the Nile. Damascus is, even now, mainly built of sun-dried brick, made with chopped straw, which reminds one of the brickfields of Egypt. Wood is used along with this humble material, but stone very rarely. Perhaps ancient Jewish towns and villages, in the same way, may have had more wood used in their construction than would be possible at present, when building-timber is practically unknown in the country; but neither wood nor mud bricks have elements of permanence. The "tells," or mounds, which mark the site of old Jewish

[1] 1 Kings v. 15; 2 Chron. ii. 8—18. [2] Josh. xix. 45.

communities, have, moreover, precisely the appearance of similar mounds now forming around, or, one might say, beneath, existing mud-brick villages in India and Egypt. The constant decay of the frail cubes and the pulverising of those spoilt in the making, gradually, in the lapse of generations, raise the whole site of the place so much that, if abandoned, it would very soon be the counterpart of the "tells" of the Palestine lowlands. It is striking to notice that such mementos of long-vanished hamlets, villages, or towns, occur invariably near some spring or running water, or where wells are easily sunk, and also on plains where clay is found, or alluvial earth. In digging into them, moreover, they are found to consist of sun-dried bricks. It is probable, therefore, that the Hebrews, on taking possession of the country, were glad to build towns and villages of the material at once cheapest and most easily obtained, in the place of some of the towns and hamlets of the Canaanites which had been utterly destroyed; but it is quite as likely that the Canaanites themselves, as a rule, lived in houses of sun-dried bricks, since we find "tells" spoken of in Joshua, if Captain Conder's translation be correct.[1]

Sun-dried bricks are made in the spring, by mixing chopped straw with wet mud or clay. This compound is then put into rude frames, about ten inches broad and three inches across, which, when filled, are left in the sun to dry. Houses of such materials need to be often repaired. The walls crumble, and the roofs, which are only layers of mud over a framework of brush, thorns, or reeds, supported by a crooked beam or two, leak badly. A stone roller is, therefore, constantly brought into requisition to close any crack or fill up any hole. If neglected

[1] The word is "Geliloth." It occurs in Joshua xiii. 2; xxii. 10, 11. But I cannot trace the grounds on which the translation "tells" is based.

for a single winter the roof would be full of holes before spring, and then the unprotected walls, soaked with the rain, would bulge out and fall into ruin. As in the days of Ecclesiastes, "By slothfulness the roof sinketh in; and through idleness of the hands the house leaketh."[1] There is no mortar of any kind to give strength, so that the only safety is in keeping the building watertight by continual oversight. Ezekiel must often have seen similar houses sunk into shapeless heaps for want of this precaution, for a single heavy rain-storm may beat them down, and hence he cries out, "Say unto them who daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall. There shall be an overflowing shower, and ye, O great hail-stones, shall come down, and a stormy wind shall rend it."[2]

A rain-soaked roof is only too well known in Palestine, and has given rise to more than one proverb of great antiquity. "A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman," the Book of Proverbs tells us, "are alike."[3] In my own case, at Tiberias, the rain fell through the tent on me in great drops; there was no protection from it. Rest was impossible; the annoyance made the whole night miserable. Could there be a better comparison for a brawling woman than this perpetual splash, splash, when one wished above all things to be quiet? "He that would hold her in," continues the text, "tries to hold in the wind," an impossible task in the draughty houses of the East, whatever one may do to shut it out. Or we may render the words, "which it is idle to hope one can close up in his hand," for she is like "one whose right hand seizes soft fat, which slips through his fingers."[4]

The language of Proverbs, and the mention of "houses of clay" by Job, show how old mud-brick dwellings are

[1] Eccles. x. 18 (R.V.).
[2] Ezek. xiii. 11.
[3] Prov. xxvii. 15.
[4] Prov. xxvii. 15 (Hitzig and Nowack).

in Palestine. Other Scriptural allusions refer to a further evil too often connected with them. Ezekiel dug a hole through the soft wall of his house as a sign to the people, and carried out through it the bundle he was to take with him in his symbolic pilgrimage,[1] and this easy excavation through the side of a dwelling-place is often taken advantage of by thieves, who "in the dark, dig through houses, and steal."[2]

The site of Antipatris, after long misconception, has, within the last few years, been definitely fixed at Ras-el-Ain, on the great Roman road which once stretched from Cæsarea to Jerusalem. It was formerly identified with the village of Kefr Saba, some miles farther north, on the plain, but a careful measurement of the known distance of Antipatris from various points has shown that a mistake had been made in the identification, and that the exact fulfilment by Ras-el-Ain of all the requirements leaves no question as to its superior and, indeed, incontestable claims. We know, for example, that Antipatris, apart from the question of its distance from various places, was on the Roman road, was surrounded by a river, and lay close to a hilly ridge; but this is not the case with Kefr Saba. No Roman road leads to it from the hills; it has no river, but only a couple of wells and the rain-water which collects in two hollows during the winter; and no trees or ruins of a town exist. Ras-el-Ain, on the contrary, besides being on the precise spot which known data require, stands beside the noble springs of the river Aujeh, which is a perennial stream. The Roman road from Tibneh, down the steep hills, runs direct to it. There is a large mound covered with heaps of stone, old foundations, broken columns, and chiselled blocks, half buried amidst the weeds and flowers which always grow up among ruins.

[1] Ezek. xii. 5. [2] Job xxiv. 16; Matt. vi. 19 (Greek).

The spring which bursts out from under this mound is one of the largest in all Palestine, and forms, at once, quite a river flowing off towards the sea: no doubt that which Josephus mentions as surrounding the town.[1] The hills which, he says, are near, rise at little more than a mile to the east, and though there are now no trees to meet another detail of his notice of the place, it would be impossible to imagine a spot on the plain more likely to have been covered with them in former times.[2] Herod the Great had, in fact, built Antipatris, named after his father, Antipater, close to the finest springs in the district, as he had rebuilt Jericho, beside the great fountain of the circle of the Jordan. Josephus, indeed, says that it stood at "Capharsaba," but this, it appears, was the name of the district in which Ras-el-Ain is found.

A mediæval castle, the Mirabel of the Crusaders, stands on a great mound at Ras-el-Ain, which measures 1,000 feet east and west, and 950 from north to south. Only the shell of the fortress, however, remains, though the outer walls are very perfect. Beneath, the springs, welling up at different points, but chiefly on the north, form dark blue pools, fringed by willows, rushes, and canes; a fine stream flowing from them with a somewhat rapid current, while the moisture covers the plain with grass, especially to the south, for several hundred yards. About a mile south is the Wady Lejja, which, although only showing pools here and there in summer, bears a strong tributary to the Aujeh in the rainy months; the two uniting about three miles beyond Ras-el-Ain.

Rest after toil is sweet. The descent from Tibneh had been most fatiguing. A Roman road may have been very nice in its day, but after 1,600 or 1,700 years'

[1] Jos. *Ant.*, xvi. 5, 2; *Bell. Jud.*, i. 21, 9.

[2] See *Pal. Fund Repts.*, 1874, pp. 185, 193; *Pal. Memoir*, ii. 260—2.

use, without repair, its condition is distressing enough. Had we been grandees it might have been made somewhat better for us, for it is still the custom, as it was in antiquity, to "prepare the way," to "cast up a highway and clear away the stones,"[1] in anticipation of the passage of any great personage. When one of the Russian Grand Dukes was travelling in the Holy Land lately, the so-called road between Jerusalem and Nablus, a distance of forty miles, usually rough beyond description, was repaired throughout. The stones were gathered out, the sides built up where they had given way, and earth strewn on the bare sheets of rock, over which, till then, the traveller had the greatest difficulty in passing safely. When Consul Rich was travelling through Koordistan, ten or fifteen peasants accompanied him, to act as pioneers in repairing bridges, and smoothing rough places. We can understand from such customs the language of the prophet respecting the triumphal return of the exiles from Babylon, under the guidance of God Himself as their Leader—"Prepare ye the way of Jehovah, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain."

Kefr Saba—that is, the village Saba—lies nearly six miles north of Ras-el-Ain, about half a mile to the west of the Roman road, from which it looks very picturesque; palm-trees rising here and there, and olive-grounds and orchards stretching north and west of it. It stands on a swell of the plain, but, though nine miles from the sea, is only 168 feet above it. Its houses are of mud and small stones, with square rain-pools of mud bricks. Its wells lie to the east. There are said to be 800 inhabitants. On

[1] Isa. xl. 3, 4; xlix. 11; lvii. 14; lxii. 10; Mal. iii. 1.

one of the spurs to the east of the road, and about as far from it as Kefr Saba, but 170 feet higher above the sea, lies Kalkilieh, the ancient Galgula or Gilgal, a long straggling village, with cisterns to the north, and a rain-pool south-west of it. The road runs nearly straight north, at the foot of the hills, which are frequently dotted with villages, almost undistinguishable from the soil around, because of the leaden colour of the mud huts. Olive-groves clothe many of the slopes, but there are more ruins than villages, and, for one olive grown, there is room for a hundred. Dry channels, worn by the winter torrents from the hills, were numerous, some deep, others comparatively shallow. About a mile off on the left hand, hills, about 300 feet high, rose for a part of the way; then, about six miles north of Kefr Saba, the plain broadened out to a wide sweep. A large part of it lay uncultivated; the only ground under the plough belonging to the people in the villages on the hills to the right, where they are safer than they would be on the lowlands. The labour of going to these distant patches of barley or wheat is nothing compared to the danger of plundering Arabs, which is escaped by living in the uplands. Thus the peasant has still to "go forth" to sow, often to a great distance from his home.[1] The breadth of soil tilled depends, each year, on the tranquillity of the country.

Zeita, a considerable village, lying 370 feet above the sea, on the edge of the hills, marks a change in the character of the plain. Groups of fine springs burst from the ground about four miles to the west, and form wide marshy streams, dear to the buffalo; long grass fringing them, and the soft mud offering the coolness in which that creature delights. Two perennial streams, the Iskanderuneh and the Mefjir, are fed from these springs. The hills are of

[1] Matt. xiii. 3.

soft white lime, like chalk; but a harder rock, stopping the percolation of surface water, lies below. Caves, tombs, and cisterns, in the rock, are frequent. As the track approached the line of Cæsarea it descended once more to the plains, passing between the hills and a region of oak forest. Here the slopes and plain are alike covered with fine trees, growing rather thinly; but it is not a comfortable region for travellers, as it is the haunt of a tribe of Arabs, known as the "Club-bearers," very poor and equally unscrupulous. The white narcissus was to be seen everywhere, but it was too early for the blue iris, which by some authorities has been identified, as we have seen, with the lily of the valley. To the south the trees were thicker than farther north; the scenery everywhere, however, being very charming.

CHAPTER IV.

CÆSAREA—ATHLIT.

The sand, which elsewhere is generally confined to the coast and a narrow strip inland, has overwhelmed the country for four miles east of Cæsarea, to the edge of the oak forest, which, by the way, is the last remnant of the great forests of which Strabo speaks. The ruins of the once famous city lie low, amidst broad dunes of drifted sand, so that they cannot be seen more than a mile off on the land side.

Cæsarea must always have a profound interest from its connection with the early history of the Church. The devout centurion Cornelius, whose "prayers and alms had gone up for a memorial before God," was stationed here with his regiment, the Italian cohort, when the vision was granted in which an angel directed him to send to Joppa for Peter. To induce the apostle to set out, however, a vision to him also was needed, enforcing the lesson that "God is no respecter of persons: but that in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him."[1] That vision was the proclamation, in unmistakable symbolism, that the Gentile should be fellow-heir with the Jew of the "unsearchable riches of Christ." As the first convert from a non-Israelitish race, Cornelius is the representative of all who in every nation have since believed

[1] Acts x. 34, 35.

in the Crucified One. In his case the Holy Ghost was first poured out on the heathen, and his baptism was the first outside the chosen people. Henceforth, no man could any longer be called "common or unclean,"[1] and it was made clear that "to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life."[2] To all the nations beyond the sea which laved the shores of Palestine, Britain among them, the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven were then proclaimed to be standing open. It was at Cæsarea also that the evangelist Philip, with his four daughters, made his home.[3] St. Paul passed through it on his way to Tarsus, and he landed at it from Ephesus and from Ptolemais.[4] In its prison, moreover, two years of his life were spent, before he finally left the East for Rome and Spain.[5] The track by which he had been brought from Antipatris to Cæsarea, under cover of night, had been for the most part ours. In the theatre, built by Herod the Great, his grandfather—Herod Agrippa—in the fourth year of his reign was struck with mortal disease.[6] He had ordered public shows in honour of Cæsar to be exhibited in the theatre facing the sea, on the south of the city, and on the second day of these festivities, the day which had been fixed for his public appearance,[7] presented himself in robes of silver tissue, in the early morning. The sun shone full on the amphitheatre, built as it was for open-air exhibitions, his beams striking back from Agrippa's glittering robes with a splendour that made him seem more than mortal. Nor were flatterers long in using the opportunity to hail him as a god, a form of blasphemous adulation long common towards kings in the East, and latterly introduced towards the Cæsars. Proud to be exalted like them, the king

[1] Acts x. 28.
[2] Acts xi. 18.
[3] Acts xxi. 8.
[4] Acts xviii. 22; xxi. 8.
[5] Acts xxiv. 27.
[6] Acts xii. 21; Jos. *Ant.*, xix. 8, 2.
[7] Acts xxv. 23.

accepted the monstrous homage, but only to his ruin, for there and then a violent pain smote him in his body, so that he had to be carried to his palace, where, after five days, he died, worn out with pain.[1] The Acts of the Apostles adds, "eaten by worms." So, the Jews held, Antiochus Epiphanes, the great persecutor of their religion, had died.[2]

Cæsarea was one of the cities built by Herod the Great, a man of vast energy and ability. The site chosen was that of an old town known as Strato's Tower, the name being changed in honour of the Emperor Augustus: a form of flattery common in that age, when so many cities were rebuilt or founded to undo the havoc of the great civil wars, which had laid so many places in ruins. Samaria, Ascalon, Antipatris, and many other towns, owed much to the magnificent conceptions of Herod. But in Cæsarea his genius displayed itself in results surpassing the architectural triumphs of any of the old Hebrew kings, excepting perhaps Solomon, whose great walls at Jerusalem, to prepare a site for his Temple, must have been truly wonderful creations. Till Herod's day the plain of Sharon had been simply a broad tract of pasture, forest, and tillage, with no history, but he raised it to the foremost place in the land. The want of a port to receive the commerce of the West had always been felt, and the closer relations of all countries, under Rome, had deepened the feeling. The shore offered no natural harbour, but there was a rocky ledge at Strato's Tower, as at Ascalon on the south, and Dor on the north, and this Herod chose as the seat of a projected port. In twelve years a splendid city rose on the ledge and its neighbourhood, with broad quays, magnificent bazaars, spacious public buildings and courts, arched sailors' homes, and long avenues of commodious streets. A double harbour had

[1] Jos. *Ant.*, xix. 28. [2] 2 Macc. ix. 5—9.

been constructed, of about 200 yards each way, and also a pier, over 130 yards in length, built of stones fifty feet long, eighteen broad, and nine thick. This great structure was raised out of water twenty fathoms deep, and was 200 feet wide, a wall standing on it, and several towers, the largest of which was called Drusus, after the step-son of Augustus. The pier was adorned, moreover, with splendid pillars, and a terraced walk extended round the harbour. On an eminence, beside a temple of polished stone, near the shore, rose a colossal statue of Augustus, as Jupiter Olympus, visible far out at sea, and another of Rome, deified as Juno. A huge open-air theatre was built on the slopes of the hills, some miles north of the city, as well as a great amphitheatre, 560 feet in diameter, and capable of containing 20,000 spectators. A hippodrome, or as we might call it, a circus, over 1,000 feet long, rose in the east of the city; the remains of a goal-post of granite, still seen on its site, showing the magnificence of the whole structure; for the three blocks of which it consists originally formed a conical pillar, seven feet six inches high, standing on a mass of granite proportionately massive, and all resting, apparently, on a base formed of a single granite block, thirty-four feet long, brought from Egypt. The walls of the Herodian city enclosed an area of 400 acres, but gardens and villas, it may be presumed, stretched far beyond them in the centuries of the Roman peace. Besides the theatres, a grand palace, afterwards the residence of the Roman governors, was erected for himself by Herod; and he had the wisdom, so unusual in the East, to provide for the city a complete system of underground sewerage, after the Italian plan. To supply the city with water two aqueducts were built; one, with a double conduit of great size, stretching away, for the most part on arches, but

in part through a tunnel,[1] first north, then east, for over eight miles, to the great springs issuing all over this district from the Carmel hills, which slant down beyond Cæsarea, on the other side of the plain. The second aqueduct, on the level of the ground, ran three miles north, to the perennial stream of the river Zerka.

The ruins now left have seen a strange history. It was in Cæsarea that the conflict arose between Jews and Greeks which led to the last Jewish war, and it was in the circus, which has long since perished, that Titus, after the fall of Jerusalem, celebrated splendid games in which over 2,000 Jewish prisoners were killed, as gladiators, in the arena. Two centuries later Cæsarea was the seat of a Christian bishop. Here the illustrious Father, Origen, found an asylum; and here the Church historian, Eusebius, a native of Palestine, wore the mitre.[2]

With the Crusades a new Cæsarea rose amidst the wreck of that of Herod, but it has long since shared the fate of its predecessor. The shattered skeleton of the mediæval castle rises high above the ancient mole on the south side of the harbour; the ends of rows of marble pillars, from the city of Herod, protruding from the walls in which they have been imbedded to give additional strength. Others lie on the strand, the wall into which they were built having perished. Still others, sixty or seventy in number, and from five to nearly twenty feet long, lie side by side, on a reef or ancient mole, once the north side of the harbour, and form a kind of jetty about 200 feet long. Huge masses of granite lying about, tell the same tale of ruin. Of Herod's temple only the foundations remain, the buildings which

[1] Long staircases leading down to this are cut in the rock.

[2] Consecrated A.D. 315.

they adorned having long since disappeared; but the whiteness of these foundations, contrasting strongly with the brown sandstone of later builders, shows that, as Josephus tells us, they were brought from a distance at great expense. The defences of the old Roman city have long since perished, but the sandstone walls of the Cæsarea of the Middle Ages still show massive fragments, some of them from twenty to thirty feet high; their buttresses and moats here and there still perfect. Over the whole site, amidst a wilderness of thistles, wild flowers, and thorny growths, lie scattered fallen pillars and heaps of masonry; the wreck of palaces, temples, churches, mosques, and public buildings. On the top of the hill, in the south part of the Crusading city, are the foundations of the cathedral, and on the north are the ruins of a second church, of much smaller dimensions. Once gay, Cæsarea, which even in the Middle Ages was famous for the running streams in its streets, its date-palms, and oranges, sweet and bitter, has for many generations been at best only a place where the passing shepherd folds his flocks—for the walls and buildings were destroyed by the Sultan Bibars in 1265. But the prosperity of the city has always depended on artificial sources. Since it was without a natural harbour, the destruction of the mole cut off trade by sea, and the breaking of the aqueducts stopped the supply of water, for there is only one brackish well within the walls. Man withdrawn, the restless sand was free to spread its shroud over all his works, and create the desolation that now reigns far and near.

North of Cæsarea, the Carmel hills approach within a little more than a mile of the shore, close to which there is a lower range, leaving only a narrow strip of plain between the two. To the east, however, before this

narrower strip begins, the hills retire three or four miles, to trend southwards at that distance. At the foot of this bay of heights, steadily rising till they become the central mountains of the land, the whole plain is more or less marshy and unsafe. Treacherous bogs and spongy turf, dotted with bushes and tall reeds, characterise the whole region, which we carefully avoided, as our horses would infallibly have sunk every here and there to their girths, had we ventured to cross it. All the hill-slopes are covered with a sprinkling of oaks, which are like those to the south, on the plain, but that they grow more openly. It is, indeed, a nearly universal feature of trees in Palestine that they stand thus apart; the interval being, as a rule, covered with a tangle of thorns or undergrowth. Scrub is much more prevalent, as I have already said, west of the Jordan, than trees of any height, though there are a good many fairly well-grown oaks and other trees beyond Nazareth and round Cæsarea Philippi, but they always stand like trees in a park rather than in a wood. Tabor is one mass of scrub and stunted growths, and Carmel is much the same; while the hills of Ephraim and Benjamin have scarcely any wood on them at all. Indeed, the whole region east of the watershed at Nablus is very bare, from Gilboa to the wilderness in the south. West and north-west of Hebron, on the other hand, the hills are rough, once more, with scrub. The numerous herds of goats are in great part the cause of this dwarf timbering, but the charcoal-burners, who dig out the very roots of the bushes for charcoal, are even more guilty of creating the treeless desolation.

It may be that the Bible word "yaar" once meant woods in our sense, and that the Arab "waar," now used for stunted, scraggy thickets, has come to be so used from the disappearance of trees worthy of the name. It is at

least certain that we read of Kirjath Jearim, "the Town in the Woods," or "yaars," and that there was even in the now barren valleys east of Bethel a "yaar" in which bears found shelter.[1] Jeremiah and other prophets[2] speak of lions, boars, and other wild beasts haunting the "yaar" in their day; and the murmur of the leaves in a great wood when stirred by the wind;[3] the stripping of the trees by the violence of a storm;[4] the hewing down with the axe, which is used as a figure of the havoc with which an invader hews down a widespread population,[5] and the grand spectacle of woods on fire, are frequently introduced in prophetic imagery.[6] If not abounding with lofty, umbrageous woods like our own, the landscapes of Palestine must have been richer long ago than they are now with some form of scrub, or trees of moderate growth, such as are still seen in some places.

The Zerka in part drains the wide, marshy ground along the foot of the hills, but a dam built about a mile from the sea, to give a full rush of water for mills, has by neglect overflowed a large district north and south till it is a mere swamp, in which, strange to say, it is affirmed that crocodiles are still found, though very rarely. One was, indeed, killed in it some years since, and sent to the English missionary at Nazareth, where Furrer saw the preserved skin;[7] but in any case they are exceedingly rare. A huge lizard, measuring from three to five feet, found at times in Palestine, and common in Egypt and the Sinai peninsula, may have passed muster as a crocodile in some cases where these hateful saurians have been supposed to have been seen elsewhere; but in the Zerka at

[1] 2 Kings ii. 24.
[2] Ps. l. 10; Isa. lvi. 9; Jer. v. 6; xii. 8; Amos iii. 4; Mic. v. 8.
[3] Isa. vii. 2. [4] Ps. xxix. 9. [5] Isa. x. 34.
[6] Ps. lxxxiii. 14; Isa. ix. 18; Jer. xxi 14.
[7] Schenkel, *Bib. Lex.*, iii. 612.

least the prophets could find materials for their introduction of the crocodile as their symbol of Egypt, as so frequently happens.[1] The village of Kefr Saba[2] seems to owe its name to the commonness near it, in old times, of a grass-green lizard, sometimes eighteen inches long, still called "Sab" by the Arabs.

On the heights over the winding course of the Zerka, about three miles from the sea, are copious fountains, now called Ma-mas, which were utilised by Herod to supply the great aqueduct of Cæsarea. Near them, on the slope of a hill, in a wilderness of lusty weeds and grass, amidst what seem to be the ruins of a considerable town, are the remains of an open-air theatre, in which the good folk of Christ's day, no doubt, often gathered from the neighbouring city, and from the houses and villas then thickly covering many nearer spots. It is built in the form of a half-circle, the front measuring 166 feet across. The stone seats have long since been carried to Joppa, Jerusalem, or Beirut, as building material, like the wreck of Cæsarea itself; but the vaults beneath and the chambers, from which the horses and other animals introduced in the displays were brought into the arena, are still used as stables and granaries by the peasants. The spectators must have enjoyed varied delights in such a spot, for, apart from the excitement of the games, the beauty of the view over the plain before them, and the mountains and sea, on the one hand and the other, is bewitching even now. From Cæsarea the best road to this outlying country resort of its citizens is along the top of the double high-level aqueduct; but though not, perhaps, actually dangerous, the journey is such as to need steady nerves.

The Zerka, which must have had crocodiles in its

[1] Isa. xxvii. 1; li. 9; Ezek. xxix. 3; xxxii. 2.

[2] Kefr or Caphar means "village."

marshes in former times, since its ancient name was the Crocodile River,[1] is mainly fed by the great springs of Ma-mas, and flows into the sea over a stony bed, with a strong current, from five to ten yards across and about two feet deep. The damming back of its waters higher up forms a broad, deep, blue pool, passing into wide marshes, quite impassable on both banks. In these the tamarisk grows luxuriantly, and along the stream below the dam the Syrian papyrus is found; the course, higher up, being hidden in wide stretches of cane-brake and rushes. It can only be crossed by a low foot-bridge at the mill, leading over the dam—unless one be near the sea, where it is generally fordable. Ages long dead are brought back again for the moment by noticing that its mouth is guarded by a narrow Crusading fort, near which are the remains of a bridge of the same date.

From the Zerka, north, there is only a very narrow plain, cultivated, in part, with olive-groves, hanging on the hill-slopes to the east, while a low range of rocks, about sixty feet high, runs parallel with the sea on the west. It is a wearisome ride of about nine hours from Cæsarea to the northern extremity of the plain, at Carmel, but there is at the same time a special interest in the evidences one sees of a long-past prosperity, strikingly in contrast with the present condition of the district. About nine miles from Carmel, to the south, lie the ruins of Athlit, one of the chief landing-places of pilgrims during the thirteenth century. A rocky promontory shooting out a quarter of a mile into the sea was made use of by the Templars in 1218 as the fitting site for a great fortress, which they forthwith raised on the old foundations of some town, of which nothing even then was known. An outer wall, once strongly fortified, can still be traced for 800

[1] Reland, *Pal.*, p. 730.

yards north and south, and for 300 yards thence to the sea on the west though only a few fragments of the masonry, sufficient to show the huge size of the stones used, have escaped being carried off to Acre as ready-made building materials. Outside this great wall ran a deep ditch, into which the sea flowed, completely surrounding the stronghold.

In the centre of the promontory rises the citadel, with walls of sandy, porous limestone, fifteen feet thick and thirty feet high, now much ruined; the remains of a magnificent church in one corner of the enclosure attesting the fervour of the old champions of the faith, as the citadel itself shows their energetic valour. The eastern wall of one of the old towers of the city still rises proudly to a height of eighty feet, but it stands alone. Huge vaults honeycomb the interior of the citadel; one, which is cemented, being said to be an oil-vat, capable of containing 260,000 gallons. Another has been explored to the distance of 264 feet; a third has a groined roof, with ribbed arches; illustrations, all of them, of the spirit and the lavish expenditure of means and skill which the Crusaders displayed in their structures.

Six or seven miles south of Athlit lie the ruins of Dor, now known as Tanturah; the ancient chariot-road running outside the low coast-hills, near the sea, but separated from it by a strip of land and marsh. A few goat-herds watering their flocks at a clay trough were the only human beings seen most of the way, but along the edges of a tiny stream, oleanders, lupins, grass, and tall bushes relieved the tameness of the view. The tribe of Manasseh was to have had this part of the land, but could not, for centuries, drive out the "Canaanite," though in the end it compelled him to pay tribute.[1] Four miles south

[1] Judg. i. 27, 28.

of Athlit, near the small village of Sarafend, a pleasant relief from sand and marshes was offered by fields of sesame, millet, and tobacco, as well as by some palm-trees near the shore, and fig-orchards, for which the spot is famous. Indian corn, vegetables, olives, figs, and other fruit are grown here and there in these parts by the industry of the people of one or two villages. Old quarries, tombs, ruins, and bog are, however, more frequent than cultivated fields or gardens, reaching up to the ruins of Tanturah, which stand on a rough promontory, with a tower thirty feet high, showing the site of an old Crusading fortress. The modern village is a little farther south, on the site of the old Canaanite city of Dor,[1] afterwards the Dora of the Romans, memorials of which, in the shape of pillars and sculptured capitals, slabs of marble, and hewn stones, strew the shore. A few mud huts, two or three better than the rest, make up the hamlet, which looks miserable enough in its environment of sand and marshy flat. One of the principal houses consisted of a single square room, of good size, plastered with mud, and roofed with branches long since varnished black by the smoke. These hung down roughly over one half of the room; the other half was hidden by a canvas ceiling. The door had no hinges, but was lifted to its place, or from it, and the windows were only square holes in the mud walls. A clay bench, joined to the wall, ran along one side of the room, serving for chairs by day and sleeping-places by night. A rough cooking table of clay and stone, from the ruins, was at one corner, with a little charcoal glowing on the top of it—chiefly, as it seemed, to roast coffee-berries and boil water in which to infuse them, when they had been duly pounded in a stone or wooden mortar.

It cannot be said that this neighbourhood is a very

[1] Josh. xvii. 11.

inviting one to the traveller, the natives being so savage and rude that their local feuds often give great trouble. Rock-hewn tombs are common, but the only use to which they are now put seems to be to hide away the bodies of men who have been robbed and killed. In one case Captain Conder found in an old Jewish tomb six corpses, belonging apparently to strangers recently murdered. The number of skulls and bones in other tombs, he adds, astonished him, till he found that many of them were fractured, and was told that they had belonged to persons murdered by the villagers.

A little south of Tanturah is another perennial stream, like the rest in the district in being only a few miles long, and fed by the marshes. The road is unspeakably desolate: sand on one side, bog on the other; while the element of danger adds to the eagerness with which it is left behind. A guard is a wise precaution in this part, whether for property or for person.

Recrossing the Zerka, and keeping the coast-road by Cæsarea, the sand stretches inland for miles, a few stunted oaks being the only prominent vegetation. Not a house or living being was to be seen. Passing the harbour of Abu Zabura, at which fragments of broken pottery tell of a village or town once in existence on the spot, the stream Iskanderuneh empties itself into the sea. In a dry season it can be forded at its mouth, but sometimes it needs much trouble to get across. A little way back from the shore it is, indeed, impracticable to approach it, from the danger of quicksands and treacherous marsh. The deep sand on the shore was very fatiguing as we toiled on under the perpendicular cliffs, which shut out all view of the country for the time. It was better, therefore, to take advantage of an opening in the ridge on our left and turn inland to Mukhalid, the first village on our way, lying

on the track to the south, about a mile from the cliffs. It is in the heart of the chief melon-growing district of Palestine, and must present a striking scene when the crop is being harvested. Hundreds of camels then wait their turn to be loaded with the huge fruit, or stalk away with a full burden of it. Peasants in their white turbans and shirts, the latter duly girt round them by a leather strap, assiduously gather the different kinds of melon, while the tent of the tax-collectors, pitched in the fields, shows that these oppressors are on the look-out to lay a heavy hand on the produce, for the Government. How is it that great vegetable globes, like these melons, so full of water, thrive thus wonderfully on so hot and sandy a soil? The camel-loads of them taken to the shore fill a thousand boats each summer. Indeed, if it were not for fear of the Bedouins, there need be no limit to the quantity grown.

The secret of this luxuriant fertility lies in the rich supply of moisture afforded by the sea-winds which blow inland each night, and water the face of the whole land. There is no dew, properly so-called, in Palestine, for there is no moisture in the hot summer air to be chilled into dewdrops by the coolness of the night, as in a climate like ours. From May till October rain is unknown, the sun shining with unclouded brightness day after day. The heat becomes intense, the ground hard; and vegetation would perish but for the moist west winds that come each night from the sea. The bright skies cause the heat of the day to radiate very quickly into space, so that the nights are as cold as the day is the reverse: a peculiarity of climate from which poor Jacob suffered, thousands of years ago, for he too speaks of "the drought consuming him by day, and the cold by night."[1] To this coldness

[1] Gen. xxxi. 40.

of the night-air the indispensable watering of all plant life is due. The winds, loaded with moisture, are robbed of it as they pass over the land, the cold air condensing it into drops of water, which fall in a gracious rain of mist on every thirsty blade. In the morning the fog thus created rests like a sea over the plains, and far up the sides of the hills, which raise their heads above it like so many islands. At sunrise, however, the scene speedily changes. By the kindling light the mist is transformed into vast snow-white clouds, which presently break into separate masses and rise up the mountain-sides, to disappear in the blue above, dissipated by the increasing heat. These are the "morning clouds and the early dew that go away" of which Hosea speaks so touchingly.[1] Any one standing at sunrise on a vantage-ground in Jerusalem, or on the Mount of Olives, and looking down towards the Dead Sea, must have seen how the masses of billowy vapour, filling the valleys during the night, sway and break up when the light streams on them from over the mountains of Moab; their shape and colour changing each moment before the kindling warmth as they rose from the hollows of the landscape, and then up the slopes of the hills, till they passed in opal or snowy brightness into the upper air, and at last faded into the unclouded sky.

The amount of moisture thus poured on the thirsty vegetation during the night is very great. Tent coverings are often soaked with it as if there had been a heavy rain, and a bright moon frequently creates the striking spectacle of a lunar rainbow. "Dew" seemed to the Israelites a mysterious gift of Heaven, as indeed it is. "Who has begotten the drops of dew?" is one of the questions put to Job by the Almighty Himself.[2] That the skies should be stayed from yielding it was a special sign of

[1] Hos. vi. 4. Rather, the "dew which early." [2] Job xxxviii. 28.

Divine wrath,[1] and there could be no more gracious conception of a loving farewell address to his people than where Moses tells them that his "speech" should "distil as the dew." Gideon's fleece, out of which a bowlful of dew was wrung, was a symbol familiar to the great citizen-soldier; and no imprecation more terrible could be uttered against Mount Gilboa, defiled by the death of Saul and Jonathan, than that no "dew" should fall on it henceforth.[2] Hushai, in his subtle, misleading counsel to Absalom, could suggest no more striking image of the silent surprise of David by irresistible numbers than that the gathered multitude of Israel would fall upon him as the "dew" falleth on the ground.[3] Job pictures his hopes of abiding prosperity by the prayer that "his root" would spread out beside the [irrigating] waters, and that the "dew" would lie "all night on his branch."[4] The youths of Israel, as of all nations, were her "dew."[5] The favour of an Oriental monarch could not be more beneficially conceived than by saying that, while "his wrath is like the roaring of a lion, his favour is as dew upon the grass."[6] The "head" of the Beloved "is filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night."[7] Isaiah, speaking of the advance of the Assyrians against Jerusalem and Judah, shows that he too had noticed the mists that rest on the wide plains and sweeping valleys during the nights of the hot months, for he says, if we may expand his words so as to give their force more clearly than it appears in the Authorised Version: "I will keep my eyes on them through the whole summer, while the unclouded sunshine ripens the herbs, and the night mists

[1] Hagg. i. 10; 1 Kings xvii. 1.
[2] 2 Sam. i. 21.
[3] 2 Sam. xvii. 12.
[4] Job xxix. 19.
[5] Ps. cx. 3.
[6] Prov. xix. 12.
[7] Cant. v. 2.

temper the heat of harvest."[1] Any one who has ever watched the white morning fog in harvest-time, in Palestine, when at sunrise it was quite impossible to see any distance round, and the villagers, driving their flocks afield, could only with infinite trouble prevent their being lost in the mist; shouts and uproar rising on all sides, as camels, horses, donkeys, cows, goats, and sheep, were urged off through the hazy sea of vapour; must have felt that, though painfully chilly by night, it tempered the air in the early day, till the fierce sun had drunk up the moisture. "Awake and sing," cries Isaiah, "ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead!"[2] He thinks of the sad condition of Palestine when the exiles return from Babylon, its slaughtered multitudes lying asleep in the dust around them; and in a burst of patriotic fervour, clothed in poetical metaphor, cries out, "O that thy dead bodies could arise! Awake and sing, ye dwellers in the dust of the grave! For thy dew—the favour of Jehovah—gives life, as the dew of herbs revives the glebe, and through its mighty power the earth shall bring to life the dead!" How blessed the assurance, finally, in the precious promise: "I will be as the dew unto Israel!"[3]

The melon district reaches to the stream El-Falik, a short perennial river, little more than a mile in length, issuing from great marshes behind. Just above it a tongue of sand runs two miles inland, the low hills farther east being thinly dotted with oak-trees of good size—the remains of the old Crusading forest of Assur. North of Mukhalid the country belongs to a tribe of Arabs, who, though few in number, claim to have formerly held all the

[1] Isa. xviii. 4. Geikie, *Hours with the Bible*, vol. iv., p. 445.
[2] Isa. xxvi. 19. Geikie, *Hours with the Bible*, vol. v., p. 44.
[3] Hos. xiv. 5.

land between Tiberias and Cæsarea, Carmel and Beisan. To the south of the village, however, the Nefeiah, or Club-bearing Arabs—a rough set—swarm in the marshes and woodlands. The landscape round is a great rolling plain, with low slopes varying its monotony; its height above the sea from 150 to 200 feet, while hills of blown sand stretch all along the shore, to varying distances inland, except where streams force their way through them. At some points, however, the shore rises in bluffs nearly to the level of the plain behind, and these, where they occur, are a great preservative of the soil, preventing the sand from blowing over it. Round the marshes the pasturage is excellent in spring, and hence Sharon was famous in Jewish history as the feeding-ground for the royal flocks and herds. In David's time these were under a head shepherd, himself a Sharon man—one Shitrai.[1] The pastures of Sharon were, indeed, famous from the earliest times, and had a king in Joshua's day,[2] while after the Hebrew invasion they seem for a time to have been in the hands of the tribe of Gad,[3] but the desolation spread over them by the "overflowing flood" of Sennacherib's invasion is bewailed by Isaiah,[4] who, by the way, like all Old Testament writers, always speaks of "the Sharon," meaning the whole plain from Carmel to Joppa. Before this ruin by the Assyrian it must have been specially prosperous, for "the excellency of Carmel and Sharon" is the prophet's ideal of luxuriant fertility,[5] and the full joy of the Messianic kingdom is, in part, imaged by Sharon being so restored that it would become once more "a fold of flocks."[6]

Round the few villages in the plain there are generally

[1] 1 Chron. xxvii. 29. [2] Josh. xii. 18.
[3] 1 Chron. v. 16. For "suburbs" read "pastures."
[4] Isa. xxxiii. 9. [5] Isa. xxxv. 2. [6] Isa. lxv. 10.

patches of corn, vegetables, or olives; but by far the greater part of the soil is uncultivated. El-Falik is approached through a wild tangle of hawthorn, dwarf oak, arbutus, and rue, and its short course is fringed by the Syrian papyrus reed, which looks at a distance like a dwarfed palm-tree, and by thickets of oleanders and other shrubs. The name of the place means "the Cutting," and has been given it from its being only an artificial drain, made to lower the water in the marshes. An uninhabited sandy ground with undulating surface succeeds, stretching nearly five miles south in a treeless and houseless desolation. Reeds and rushes spring beside stagnant pools; patches of thistles and coarse grass are the main growths. Some pines, indeed, are to be seen on the sandy slopes; but they are rare and small. A few mud huts here and there, offering shelter to shepherds from the heat by day and the cold by night, when they chose to take advantage of them, are the only apologies for human habitations.

Arsuf, the Apollonia of Josephus,[1] lies on the shore between five and six miles south of El-Falik; but there was nothing to detain us at its ruins except a tunnel near it, cut for 535 feet through the rocks, by the Romans, I suppose, with an air-shaft half-way; the object being to drain a great marsh behind. Now, however, it only shows the difference between the past and the present in Sharon, for it has ages ago become useless, the sand having choked it up for centuries. Between this point and the river Aujeh, five or six miles north of Joppa, there was only one small village, a poor place, with a well and a rain-tank, near which stood two or three trees; a carob or locust-tree among them. It was from the pods of this that the Prodigal sought a poor sustenance when feeding his master's swine:[2] the lowest possible occupation for a

[1] Jos. *Ant.*, xiii. 15, 4. [2] Luke xv. 16.

Jew, since the employer must have been a heathen, and the swine were, in themselves, an abomination to an Israelite. The thick foliage of the tree, of a deep green, with very dark, glossy, evergreen leaves, rising to a height of about twenty or thirty feet, like a large apple-tree, makes it a striking object in the bare landscape of Palestine. In February it is covered with innumerable purple-red pendent blossoms, which ripen in April and May into huge crops of pods from six to ten inches long, flat, brown, narrow, and bent like a horn,[1] with a sweetish taste when still unripe. Enormous quantities of these are gathered for sale in the various towns, and for exportation; England, among other places, taking large consignments; their name in this country being locust beans. I have often seen them on stalls in Eastern cities, where they are used as food by the very poorest, but chiefly to fatten pigs if there be Christians in the neighbourhood, or for horses and cattle. That they were eaten as human food, though only by the poorest of the poor, in the time of our Lord, is incidentally proved by their being mentioned by both Horace and Juvenal[2] as thus used. The Prodigal very likely drove his herd below the trees, as is still frequently the custom, to let them eat the pods, which fall off as soon as they are dry. It is curious to remember that the bean found in the pod gave its name to the smallest Hebrew weight—the gerah, twenty of which made a shekel.[3]

The monks in the Middle Ages, unwilling to believe that John the Baptist fed upon locusts, came to the

[1] Hence the Greek name of the tree, *κεράτια*, from *κεράτιον* = "a little horn."

[2] Horace (born B.C. 65, died B.C. 8), *Epist.*, Bk. II., i. 123; Juvenal (born about A.D. 40, died about A.D. 120), *Sat.*, xi. 58. Bochart in his *Hierozoicon*, i. 708, has a very learned article on the carob.

[3] Ex. xxx. 13; Lev. xxvii. 25; Ezek. xlv. 12.

conclusion that this pod[1] was meant, and gave the tree the name of St. John's Bread. There can, however, be no doubt that the well-known insect was really intended, since it is still eaten extensively by the Arabs and others. "The Bedouins eat locusts," says Burckhardt, the greatest of travellers, "which are collected in great quantities in the beginning of April, when the sexes cohabit, and they are easily caught. After having been roasted a little on the iron plate on which bread is baked, they are dried in the sun, and then put into large sacks with the mixture of a little salt. They are never served up as a dish, but every one takes a handful of them when hungry. The peasants of Syria do not eat locusts, nor have I myself had an opportunity of tasting them; there are a few poor fellahs in the Haurân, however, who sometimes, pressed by hunger, make a meal of them; but they break off the head and take out the entrails before they dry them in the sun. The Bedouins swallow them entire."[2] Writing elsewhere of the Arabs of other regions, he says, "All the Bedouins of Arabia, and the inhabitants of towns in Nejd and Hedjaz, are accustomed to eat locusts. I have seen, at Medina and Tayf, locust shops, where these animals were sold by measure. In Egypt and Nubia they are only eaten by the poorest beggars. The Arabs, in preparing them for food, throw them alive into boiling water, with which a good deal of salt has been mixed. After a few minutes they are taken out and dried in the sun; the head, feet, and wings are then torn off; the bodies are cleansed from the salt and perfectly dried, after which process whole sacks are filled with them by the Bedouin. They are sometimes eaten boiled in butter, and they often contribute materials for a breakfast, when spread over

[1] Maundrell: 8th edition, Lond. 1810, p. 124.
[2] Burckhardt, *Syria*, 4to, p. 239.

unleavened bread, mixed with butter." Dr. Kitto, who tried locusts, says they taste very much like shrimps. St. John may well have eaten them, since his life in the wilderness left him no source of richer food. Wild honey he could obtain in abundance from trees and clefts in the rocks.

The river Aujeh is the largest stream in the plain of Sharon, winding across it from beneath the mound of Ras-el-Ain—the ancient Antipatris, close to the hills, which are about ten miles off, in a straight line. It is strong enough to have made a permanent opening through the sand-hills, and is never dammed up by them like some weaker streams on the plain, which become marshes in the dry season, though in winter, when swollen by the rains, they gain force enough to break through again to the sea. A dam over the river turns aside a powerful current, which drives twelve pairs of stones, most of them busy when I passed, grinding flour for customers. The splash of the water as it fell in white waves from the restless wheels and rushed to join the main stream was delightful in such a climate. The river is perhaps twenty yards broad, and of a good depth.

A short distance outside Joppa lies the German village of Sarona, called after the plain in which it stands. On the way we passed two long strings of camels, one laden with oil in black skin bottles from Nablus; the other with bags of rice from the same town. It was doubtless in similar skin jars, if I may use the word, that King Menahem of Samaria, while professing to be loyal to Assyria, sent gifts of oil to Pharaoh, in Egypt, the hereditary foe of the Assyrian,[1] to secure his support. They are made of the entire skin of a he-goat, the places where the legs and tail have been, being carefully

[1] Hos. xii. 1. Geikie, *Hours with the Bible,* iv. 265.

sewn up, and an opening left at the neck, large enough to form a mouth, for filling and emptying. To enable them to resist the heat of the sun, and to keep them soft, they are smeared with oil.

The German colony is now firmly established and prosperous, but as many as fifty poor Teutons died before they could be acclimatised. A "town-house" of wood, a windmill used for pumping, a town clock, wheeled vehicles, a forge, European ploughs guided by native peasants but drawn by horses, a factory for all kinds of wooden machinery and implements, from waggons to plough-handles, a manufactory of tiles and of artificial stone, and other forms of Western energy and skill, showed the difference between Europeans and Asiatics.

I rested at the house of one of the chief settlers, a large commodious stone building, with a deep well under a shed close by, supplying abundant water, which was raised by oxen in an endless chain of buckets, set in motion by a horizontal wheel; it is used for household purposes, and for irrigating the garden and contiguous ground. Vines from American plants are extensively grown in the settlement, those of the country being liable to disease. A welcome, simple and hearty, was accorded me, and I left for Joppa not a little refreshed by the home-made bread and butter, both excellent, with milk. My friend had some of the local wine, and pronounced it excellent. The sandy road, nowhere "made," was at times pretty rough, in the hollows washed out by winter storms. Red anemones, bunches of lupins from last year's sowing, and tufts of squills brightened the open ground as we drove on; but Sharon, at its best, is very far from coming up to English ideas of fertility and beauty.

CHAPTER V.

THE PHILISTINE PLAIN AND SAMSON'S COUNTRY.

Leaving Joppa, with its strange crowds, my last reminiscences of it are made up of a confused dream of masons sitting cross-legged, chipping stones from Cæsarea, for the new Christian hospital; stone-breakers squatted in the same way across half the market-place, fracturing obdurate metal in stone mortars, to spread on the road; strings of donkeys and camels moving hither or thither, and a general hubbub of buyer and seller filling the air. A four-wheeled vehicle had been hired for my journey: a rough open affair, screened at the roof and sides with canvas to keep off the sun. The driver wore a felt skull-cap, dignified into a makeshift turban by a pocket-handkerchief twisted round it. His coat, worn over a blue blouse, was of woollen stuff, fancifully ornamented down the back with crimson, while the arms were of one pattern to the elbow, and another below it. Lebanon had the credit of its manufacture, though it would have been very hard to say through how many hands it may have passed before it reached those of our Jehu. Three horses, veritable screws, but wiry withal, drew us; two of them boasting headstalls and collars, made useful if not ornamental by a free application of pieces of rope; the third arrayed in nothing at all but some ropes. Of course each animal had its galls and raw

places; no horse used in harness in Palestine is without them, for there is no law against cruelty to animals, and no pity in the native heart towards dumb creatures to supply its place.

South of Joppa, the coast-plain was the country of the Philistines, whose name, the "immigrants," has, curiously, given us that of "Palestine." It was the part of Judæa earliest and best known to the Greeks, who entered the land mainly, at first, from Egypt. Hence, as the Romans gave the name of Asia and Africa, respectively, to the two provinces they first gained on these two continents, and, as the English gave the name of Dutch, though it belongs to the whole German race, to the people of Holland, who lay next their own shores, "Philistia" became the Gentile name of the entire Holy Land, in the form of "Palestine." [1]

The Philistines, as the translation of their name in the Greek Bible [2] shows, were of a different race from the peoples who were in Canaan before their appearance among them. Their territory reached from a little below Joppa, which remained in the hands of the Phœnicians, to a little below Gaza, along the coast, and back to the hills of Judæa: a district hardly fifty miles in its full length, or half that in its extreme breadth. Palestine, as a whole, it must be remembered, is a very small country. The prophet Amos [3] tells us the Philistines came from Caphtor, that is, the island of Crete, and we read elsewhere, respecting "the Avim which dwelt in Hazerim [or villages], even unto Gaza"—that "the Caphtorim, which came out of Caphtor, destroyed them, and dwelt in their stead." [4] The Avim were one of the original peoples of Palestine, who had been driven to the extreme south of the country by the

[1] *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 253.
[2] Allophyloi = "men of another tribe."
[3] Amos ix. 7.
[4] Deut. ii. 23.

Canaanites. In part enslaving these, in part driving them out, the Philistines took possession of their district. They had not, however, come direct from Crete, but had previously been settled at Cassiotis—the territory of the Casluchim,[1] on the Egyptian coast, whence salt was exported for the dry-fish trade from the ports of the Nile Delta.[2] Thence they wandered north to the more fruitful sea-coast plains of Canaan, which, from their position, had great attractions for a keenly commercial people, as it tapped at once the caravan trade with the east and south, and the sea trade with the west. Hence, already in the time of Abraham, their king Abimelech had his seat at Gerar, in the farthest south of the land, and boasted a chief of his fighting men, and a council bearing strange titles.[3] In a subsequent generation, about the year B.C. 1920,[4] the Hebrews went down into Egypt, from which they only returned after a residence of 430 years. By this time the Philistines had grown so strong that God would not allow His people to go up to Canaan by the direct and easy caravan route, still in use, because it would have brought them into conflict with so warlike a race; but led them by the circuitous route of the desert.[5]

After the Hebrew conquest of Central Palestine, three of the Philistine cities—Ekron, Ascalon, and Gaza—were taken in the first enthusiasm of the invaders, and held for a time by Judah, to whom the sea-coast plain had been assigned by Joshua.[6] They were, however, lost before that leader's death,[7] and henceforth, for 200 years, even the name of the race is seldom mentioned in the Sacred Books.[8]

[1] Gen. x. 13, 14. [2] Ebers, *Egypten und die Bücher Mosis*, p. 121.
[3] Gen. xx. 2; xxi. 32; xxvi. 1, 26. [4] Riehm, p. 1196.
[5] Exod. xiii. 17 [6] Josh. xv. 45. [7] Josh. xiii. 2.
[8] Josh. xiii. 2; xv. 45; Judg. i. 18; iii. 3.

That there was a hereditary enmity between them and the Hebrews, appears however in the incidental notice of one of the Judges—Shamgar—having slain 600 Philistines with the massive ox-goad, shod with iron, still common in those parts.[1] But towards the end of the period of the Judges,[2] the history of Samson brings the nation into prominence as the most dangerous and dreaded enemies of Israel, which they continued to be till the reign of David, who broke their power so completely that he was able to form an old and young body-guard—known as the Crethi and Plethi—from among them.[3] From this time they were only at intervals independent of the Hebrews, and they finally vanished as a people, under the iron sway of the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, and Syrians, in succession.

The few remains of their language and religion show that this remarkable people were of Semitic race, though coloured to a large extent by Grecian influences, from their temporary residence in Crete. Fierce and fond of war, they had the genius of military organisation peculiar to the West; always ready with disciplined battalions for any quarrel. Nor were they less keen as traders; their favourable position on the coast enabling them to become, in some measure, rivals of the Phœnicians. Of their political constitution we know only that their territory was divided into five small districts, respectively under the chiefs of five cities—Ekron, Gath, Ashdod, Ascalon, and Gaza. Of their religion all that has come down to us is that the god Beelzebub was worshipped at Ekron, Dagon at Gaza and Ashdod,[4] and, at a later period, the goddess Derketo in Ascalon.[5]

[1] Judg. iii. 31. [2] About B.C. 1250.
[3] 1 Sam. xxx. 14; Ezek. xxv. 16; Zeph. ii. 5.
[4] 2 Kings i. 2; Judg. xvi. 23; 1 Sam. v. 1.
[5] 2 Macc. xii. 26.

The present population of Palestine is, doubtless, largely representative, in the various districts, of the ancient races of the land, so that Philistine blood in the people of the old Philistine country may perhaps, in part, account for their being much more Egyptian, in their ways and dress, than those around them; the Philistines, as we have seen, having originally come from Crete, through Egypt. There were, however, many other nationalities in the land in Joshua's day. The Hittites—possibly a small branch of the mighty Cheta of the Egyptian monuments, whose power, at its highest, reached from the Grecian Archipelago to Carchemish, on the Euphrates—lived in and round Hebron, in the time of Abraham,[1] and, in that of Moses, among the mountains of Judah and Ephraim,[2] and were still in existence in the days of Ezra.[3] The Girgashi, or "dwellers on the clay-land," were a tribe otherwise unknown.[4] The Amorites, or "dwellers on the hills," were, perhaps, the greatest of the Canaanite races, one part of them living on the mountains of Judah,[5] which they divided into five petty kingdoms;[6] another branch, on the east of Jordan, in the northern part of Moab, divided by them into the two "kingdoms" of Heshbon and Bashan.[7] It was of their towns, on the top of the hills, in what was afterwards Judæa, that the Hebrew spies spoke as being "walled up to heaven."[8] Then there were the Canaanites, or "dwellers in the lowlands," that is, the coast, and in the depression of the Jordan. The name was used also, in a wider sense, of the Phœnicians, and from that race being the great business people of the Old World, came afterwards to mean "traders."[9] Besides these, we read of the

[1] Gen. xxiii. [2] Num. xiii. 29; Josh. xi. 3. [3] Ezra ix. 1.
[4] Deut. vii. 1. [5] Gen. xiv. 7, 13; Num. xiii. 29. [6] Josh. x. 5.
[7] Num. xxi. 13; Deut. iv. 47; Josh. ii. 10; xxiv. 12. [8] Deut. i. 28.
[9] Job xli. 6. The word "merchants" is "Canaanites" in the Heb., so in Prov. xxxi. 24.

Perizzites, or "peasants," in contrast to dwellers in towns; the Hivites, or "dwellers in villages;" and the Jebusites, or "threshing-floor people," in allusion, apparently, to the early use of the top of Mount Moriah at Jerusalem as a threshing-floor;[1] this being the one spot on which we find them. These are spoken of, perhaps in the aggregate, as nations "greater and mightier" than the Hebrews at the time of their invasion of Palestine.[2] But since those early days many additional races have occupied portions of the land, and intermarriages in the course of many ages must have united the blood of a great many nationalities in the veins of the present population.

Asses, laden with cabbages for market, passed us as we drove on from Joppa over a track in the hard sand; some veiled women, also, with baskets of lemons on their heads. They carry everything thus, and owe to their doing so an erectness of carriage which their sisters in the West might well envy. More asses, laden with sand, followed; women with black veils, girls with milk, which they carry in jars on their shoulder, as they do water. Married women carry their little children thus, in many cases. Sometimes, indeed, you meet little children, perhaps still unweaned, carried by their mother on her hips, just as Isaiah says, "Thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side."[3] A Bedouin in a striped "abba" and bright "kefiyeh," or head-shawl, kept in its place by the usual circlet of soft camel's-hair rope going twice round the head: his seat, the hump of a camel; with other camels carrying back to their villages loads of empty sacks, in which they had taken grain to Joppa or elsewhere, made us next turn aside. The men of to-day thus still carry

[1] 2 Sam. xxiv. 18—23. [2] Deut. vii. 1. [3] Isa. lx. 4.

their riches on the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the bunches of camels, as in the days of Isaiah;[1] so little have the customs of the East changed, after so many centuries.

Immense mounds of finely broken-up straw for fodder are to be seen everywhere in Egypt, and this fodder is common, also, in Palestine. Strings of camels passed towards Joppa as we went on, with huge bags of it balanced on each side of their humps. It is the only dry food for horses or cattle in Western Asia, and is largely used, also, in the valley of the Nile. The name given to it is "teben"—the same, to-day, as in the days of the patriarchs. When the grain is trampled out on the open-air threshing-floors, by the feet of cattle or by the sharp stone or iron teeth underneath the threshing-sledge,[2] the straw is necessarily broken or cut into very small pieces. These are the "teben" of which we often read in the Bible. Rebekah told Eliezer, Abraham's servant, that her brother had both "teben and provender"[3] for his camels. The children of Israel in Egypt were refused "teben" to mix with the clay of the bricks they had to make.[4] The Levite saw abundance of "teben and provender for his asses" in Gibeah, though so inhospitably received.[5] Barley and "teben" had to be provided by the rural community for the common horses, and also for those of a swifter and finer breed, belonging to Solomon.[6] The wicked, says Job, are "as teben before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away."[7] Leviathan is said to esteem "iron as teben, and brass as rotten wood."[8] In the days of the

[1] Isa. xxx. 6.
[2] Deut. xxv. 4; Isa. xli. 15.
[3] Gen. xxiv. 25.
[4] Ex. v. 7.
[5] Judg. xix. 19.
[6] 1 Kings iv. 28. For "dromedaries," read as in the text.
[7] Job xxi. 18.
[8] Job xli. 27.

Messiah "the lion shall eat teben like the ox."[1] The Word of God by His true prophets, we read in Jeremiah, was as different from the utterances of the false prophets as "teben is from wheat."[2] Thus the camel-loads that made me swerve aside throw light on a good many verses of Scripture.

The drifting sand from the shore is playing sad havoc with the Philistine plain. Immediately south of Joppa it reaches a distance of four miles inland. Towards the sea, these dunes or sand-hills present a very gentle slope, but on the land side they are much steeper, so that as the sea-wind blows the loose grains over the crest, they roll, by imperceptible degrees, farther and farther afield, gradually overwhelming gardens, orchards, and ploughed land, and, of course, under the Turk, nothing is done to stay their progress.

The road led straight south, along these yellow desolations; the telegraph wires to Egypt running at its side. Six or seven miles from Joppa I crossed the Rubin, which, when I passed, had a very small stream in its bed, linking together some almost stagnant pools, fed by springs in the wady, near the hills. On the shore, on a line with Ramleh, but out of sight from the road, lay Minet Rubin, the ancient port for Jamnia, with some vines and a few mulberries growing wild in the sand, which here probably is not deep. But there is no longer any harbour at this place, though ancient tombs in the rocks speak of a large resident population in past ages.

Yabneh, the ancient Jamnia, lies on the west side of the Rubin, the course of which I crossed by a low bridge of two arches. Springs in the river-bed cause it to be always in full flow at its mouth; the Palestine Surveyors

[1] Isa. xi. 7; lxv. 25. [2] Jer. xxiii. 28.

speaking of it as six or eight yards across near the sea, but fordable in May, 1875. At Jamnia, however, the channel is nearly dry, except after rains, though it has cut quite a ravine across the whole plain, in some parts marshy, with reeds and rushes at the sides. The village has a population of about 2,000, and lies in a conspicuous position on the top of a low green hill, four miles from the shore. Standing apart from the hills around, and bordered by a fringe of gardens, olive-yards, and fields of vetches, it looks from a distance very picturesque. Some wells and a rain-pond within mud banks, duly repaired each year, supply water. It has a small mosque, which was once a Christian church.

Yabneh, like all places in Palestine, is very old. In Joshua's day it was known as Jabneel,[1] and along with Ekron, which was near it, was assigned to the Hebrew tribe of Dan.[2] The Philistines, however, kept possession of it till King Uzziah took it and broke down its walls.[3] At a later date it was again taken, by Simon Maccabæus,[4] and remained in the hands of the Jews till Pompey gave it back to its earlier population.[5] A few years later, a large colony was transferred to it by order of the Roman Governor of Syria, and it was finally handed over by Augustus, thirty years before Christ, to Herod the Great, from whom it passed, by his will, to his sister Salome; she, in turn, leaving it to Livia, the wife of Augustus. So lightly were communities handed over by one royal personage to another in those good old days! It had now grown so large that it is said, no doubt with much exaggeration, to have been able to put 40,000 men in the field; but hatred of the Jews, who formed a large

[1] Josh. xv. 11. [2] Josh. xix. 43; Jos. *Ant.*, v. 1, 22.
[3] 2 Chron. xxvi. 6. [4] B.C. 142. [5] B.C. 63.

part of the community, caused much friction between them and their heathen fellow-citizens.

At the breaking-out of the last Jewish war, Jamnia received permission from Titus to give a home to the members of the Rabbinical College of Jerusalem, and it thus became a famous seat of Jewish learning; but it gradually sank in after-times, till it has become the insignificant place it now is.

It was with a strange feeling that one looked on the miserable collection of mud houses of which it at present consists, and thought that here the great insurrection of Barcochba—"the Son of a Star"—was planned by the Rabbis, in their despair at the edict by which Hadrian decreed the suppression of Judaism and took their power from the hands of its teachers. Everywhere throughout the Empire the Jews had been restlessly plotting and rising against the Romans for two generations, till even Hadrian, who had shown them favour at the opening of his reign, grew fierce against them; ordered the site of Jerusalem to receive a heathen name—Ælia Capitolina—and drove the ploughshare over the ruins of the Temple, as a sign that it should never be rebuilt; even forbidding any Jew so much as to approach the circuit of the Holy City. But the hope of a Messiah, who should give the victory to the ancient people of God over all their enemies, still burned in the breast of every Israelite, and the hour brought with it the man to kindle these hopes to a flame. Appealing to the prophecy of Balaam, Barcochba, apparently hitherto unknown, gave himself out as the star that was to come from Jacob, "to smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Seth,"[1] and acquired formidable power. Rabbi Akiba, a great name among the Jews, accepted him as the Messiah, and became his

[1] Num. xxiv. 17.

armour-bearer. The time predicted by Haggai was supposed to have come, when Jehovah would "shake the heavens and the earth, and overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen."[1] Barcochba was to be the Redeemer of Israel, who should free its sons from the bondage of Rome. Insurrection broke out at once. The new Messiah must have been a fierce fanatic, for he demanded that everyone who wished to follow him should submit to have one of his fingers chopped off as a test of his resolution; that circumcision should be repeated on all who had imperfectly obeyed the rite, and that the Jewish towns should be fortified—the one reasonable measure of the three! According to the Rabbis, 200,000 men, each with a finger hewn off, followed him, and as many more, unwilling to endure this test, agreed that they would drag up by the roots a cedar of Lebanon as a pledge of their spirit. Fifty strong places, and nearly 1,000 villages, were taken from the Romans, and it took three years and a half for Hadrian to quell the terrible rising. Bether, the chief fortress of the revolted Hebrews, held out for a whole year. The number who perished was reckoned at half a million, and the exasperation at the failure of the movement was so great that Barcochba's name—"the Son of a Star"—was changed by the survivors to Bar Cosiba—"the Son of a Lie."[2]

This terrible narrative shows very forcibly the ideas of the Messiah prevalent in the days of Christ. It was to make Him such a king as Barcochba that the multitude wished to lay hold on the Saviour and put Him at their head,[3] after the miracle of the Loaves and Fishes at the

[1] Hagg. ii. 21.

[2] A very full account of Barcochba's revolt is given from a Jewish point of view in Hamburger's *Real Encycl.*, ii. 85 ff.

[3] John vi. 15.

head of the Lake of Galilee, and it was because He would not lead a great rising against Rome that His countrymen finally rejected Him.

Jamnia is only four miles and a half from a famous site—Ekron, one of the chief towns of the Philistines, now called Akir. Near it, among the hills overhanging the plain, is the region of Samson's exploits and of some notable incidents in the life of David, which could not be more conveniently visited than from this point, though horses, not wheels, are required in the uplands.

Ekron is now only a mud hamlet on low rising ground, with gardens hedged with prickly pear, and a well on the north. Cisterns, empty or tenanted by birds, the stones of hand-mills, two marble columns, and a stone press, are the only ancient remains to be seen, for the Ekron of the Bible was probably built, like the present village, of unburnt bricks, which a few years reduce to dust. One of the two marble pillars still visible forms the top of the gateway leading into a very humble village mosque. Many of the inhabitants keep bees; great jars closed up at the mouth with clay, except a little entrance, serving for hives, as, indeed, is the custom generally in Palestine. Sheepskin cloaks, the fleece inside, are worn by a number of the villagers, to protect them from chill in the early morning or through the night, the contrast between the heat of the day and the cold of these hours being very great, as of old with Jacob in Mesopotamia.[1] Ekron means "barren," perhaps because, although the rich cornlands of the plain lie just below, the place itself stands on one of a long series of sandy, uncultivated swells, which, in this part, reach from the hills to the sea-coast.

This, the most northern of the five Philistine cities, was assigned by Joshua to the tribe of Judah,[2] but after-

[1] See *ante*, p. 72. [2] Josh. xiii. 3; xv. 11, 46.

wards to that of Dan,[1] though, in the end, Judah took it and for a time held it.[2] At the close of the period of the Judges, however, it was again a Philistine town, and is famous because the Ark, when taken from the Hebrews, rested in it for a time.[3] In connection with this incident it is striking to find that the two plagues inflicted on the Philistines for detaining the sacred chest are still among the number of local visitations; the habits of the people leading very often to the internal tumours called emerods in the Scripture narrative, and armies of field-mice not unfrequently ravaging the crops. The destructiveness of these pests in the East is, indeed, often very great. A friend of Dr. van Lennep[4] informed him that, one year, in Asia Minor, he "saw the depredations committed by an immense army of field-mice, which passed over the ground like an army of young locusts. Fields of standing corn and barley disappeared in an incredibly short time, and as for vines and mulberry-trees, they were gnawed at the roots and speedily prostrated. The annual produce of a farm of 150 acres, which promised to be unusually large, was thus utterly consumed, and the neighbouring farms suffered equally." It was in all probability a visitation of these mice by which the Philistines were harassed, though, indeed, there is a choice of creatures of this class in Palestine, which boasts no fewer than twenty-three varieties of the genus.[5]

It is now over 2,700 years since a solemn deputation arrived in Ekron from King Ahaziah of Samaria,[6] son of Ahab, to consult the local god, who bore the ominous name of Beelzebub, or, to write it more correctly,

[1] Josh. xix. 43. [2] Judg. i. 18; 1 Sam. vii. 14.
[3] 1 Sam. v. 10. [4] Van Lennep, *Bible Lands*, p. 285.
[5] Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*: art. "Mouse."
[6] B.C. 897—895.

Baal-zebub—the "Lord of Flies"—a title of the sun-god, as controller of the swarming insect world. Flies are at all times a severe trial in the hot months in the East, but occasionally they become almost unendurable. That they were equally troublesome in antiquity is shown by Judith being said to have pulled aside the mosquito curtains on the bed of Holofernes, when she was about to kill him.[1] In the Jordan valley the flocks and cattle are in great dread of a species of blood-sucking horse-flies, to escape from which the shepherds and herdsmen drive them to higher and colder levels, where these plagues are not found. Even the wild animals are equally tormented by these insects, and flee to elevations where they are safe from them. Cases are also known, for example in the region of Nazareth, where immense swarms of small black flies darken the air, and cannot be kept out of the mouth and nostrils; their numbers at times breaking up an Arab encampment, since even smoke and flame are hardly able to drive them away.[2] In the Bible the word "Zebub" is used twice: in the passage, "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour,"[3] and when Isaiah says that "the Lord shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt,"[4] that is, He shall make a sound like that which men use to attract and lead to the hive a swarm of bees; thus bringing from all the canals and waters of Egypt the fly which in summer is found near them in such clouds. Both on the Nile and in Palestine the common fly is met with in myriads, and, by carrying infectious matter on its feet, induces, when it lights, as it constantly does, on the corners of the eyes,

[1] Judith xiii. 9. Greek, κωνωπεῖον. In Liddell and Scott, "a bed with mosquito curtains."

[2] Riehm, p. 445. [3] Eccles. x. 1. [4] Isa. vii. 18.

purulent ophthalmia, the curse of both countries. They also draw blood by their bites, and produce festering sores, and they swarm to such an extent that any article of food not carefully covered is made useless by them in a few minutes. Some authorities even think that the words of Isaiah respecting the country on the Upper Nile, the "land of the shadowing wings,"[1] refer to the vast swarms of flies in those parts.

But poor Ahaziah had more serious matters to trouble him than Eastern fly-swarms, when his embassy appeared in the narrow streets of Ekron, so long ago. He had fallen through an upper lattice of his house and feared he was dying. The god Beelzebub had a great name for revealing the future. Would the sufferer live or die? The fame of the local oracle must have been very high, not only then, but in later times, since Beelzebub had, by Christ's day, come to be recognised as the chief of the heathen gods of Palestine, or, as the Jews put it, the "prince of the devils:"[2] a use of the name which has, among Christians, made it equivalent to that of the arch-enemy himself.

East of Ekron, which itself is 200 feet above the sea, the land rises in successive ridges to that of Tell Jezer, which stands up in prominent isolation 750 feet above the Mediterranean, at a distance of about fourteen miles from it and six from Ekron. Part of these uplands bears corn, round the small villages of Naaneh and El-Mansurah, the former—once Naamah, near Makkedah—where Joshua put to death the five kings after the rout of Bethhoron.[3] The rest is a barren reach of half-consolidated sand, without water. Below the swelling ground of the low hills the soil is rich, but only partially cultivated, and the

[1] Isa. xviii. 1. [2] Matt. ix. 34; xii. 24; Mark iii. 22.
[3] Josh. x. 10; xv. 41.

rising slopes themselves are the haunts of small encampments of wandering Bedouins. The ancient fertility of the hills has in fact been greatly diminished by the want of population, the terraces on which vineyards and orchards were planted being left to fall into ruin, so that the rich soil has to a large extent been washed away, leaving only the bare rock.

In 1874 the long-lost royal Canaanite city of Gezer was strangely re-discovered by M. Clermont-Ganneau in this hitherto unsuspected region. Finding it stated in an old Arab chronicle, in an account of a petty battle fought in this neighbourhood, that the shouts of the combatants were heard both at the village of Khulda and Tell-el-Jezer—"the Hill of Gezer"—he came to this spot, to see if he could justify his idea that the latter was really the site of the long-forgotten city. Learning from some peasants that a rude inscription was to be seen at one point, cut deeply into the natural rock, he sought it out, and to his delight found that it was in Hebrew, and read "Boundary of Gezer." The letters are supposed to be as old as the Maccabæan age—the second century before Christ—and seem to leave no doubt that Gezer has actually come once more to light. As in many other cases, a Mahommedan tomb crowns the hill, marking it out for a long distance in every direction. The Tell, that is, mound, or hill, is long and irregular in shape, with terraces at the sides, supported by a great wall of large unhewn blocks of stone. Near the eastern end is a raised square platform of earth, about 200 feet each way, containing similar blocks. This is all that is now left of the once populous city. A fine spring on the east must have supplied it abundantly with water, while the plain below stretches out in rich corn-fields to the sand-hills near the sea. If it was hard for the citizens to climb to their lofty

home, the view from it well repaid them when it was reached, for the plain of Sharon to the north, with Lydda, and doubtless, in those days, many other towns or villages, and the great Philistine plain to the south, with its varying surface and its busy life, lay at their feet; the purple mountains of Judæa rising behind them to the east, while the view to the west was only closed by the blue horizon of the great sea.[1] Desolate now for many centuries, human life was once varied enough on this airy height; for Gezer, besides being a Levitical city, and, as such, thronged with priests, was so important as to form part of the dowry of Pharaoh's daughter when she became one of Solomon's many queens.

Wady es Surar, which opens on the plain about four miles south-east of Ekron, leads directly into the country of Samson, and also to the scene of David's encounter with Goliath. It stretches up, to the south-east, into the mountains of Judæa, and is watered in its centre by the Rubin; other wadys or valleys running into it on both sides throughout its ascending length, till it loses itself in the numberless branches which pierce the hill-country in all directions. Slowly mounting it from the plain by a rough track which skirts its lower side, a long slow climb at last brings us in sight of Surah, the ancient Zorah, the birth-place of Samson, on the top of a hill 1,171 feet high, about twelve miles south-east of Ekron. Lying aloft, over the valley, this spot was evidently occupied by the Hebrews as an outpost, from which to watch their enemies, the Philistines; the eye ranging from it over the whole broad glen beneath, as well as the hills on its south side, which in Samson's day were hostile country. The present village is a moderate-sized collection of mud

[1] Gezer is mentioned in Josh. x. 33; xii. 12; xvi. 3, 10; Judg. i. 29; 2 Sam. v. 25; 1 Kings ix. 15, 16, 17; 1 Chron. vi. 67; vii. 28; xiv. 16; xx. 4.

huts[1] on the top of a bare white hill, with some olives lower down the slopes to the north and east, and a well in a little valley below; but the villagers do not use this, preferring to get their water from a spring half a mile off, at the foot of the hill. A mukam, or shrine, of a Mussulman saint stands on the south side of the village; a low square building of stone, with a humble dome and a small court, within an old stone wall, at the side. You enter the yard through a small door in this wall, up two or three steps, but beyond the bare walls, and a solitary palm-tree, twice the height of the wall, there is nothing to see. Sheikh Samat, whoever he was, lies solitary enough and well forgotten in his airy sepulchre, but the white-wash covering his resting-place marks a custom which is universal with Mussulman tombs of this kind. In almost every landscape the eye is caught by some whited sepulchre, just as the eye must have been in Bible times by those to one of which our Lord may have pointed when He denounced the Scribes and Pharisees as having, like such places, outward purity, but the very opposite within.[2] The Jews whitewashed their tombs, however, to warn passers-by of the defiling presence of death, lest too near an approach might make them unclean, and thus unfit them for any religious act, or for partaking of the Passover or entering the Temple.

On the airy hill of Surah or Zorah, the border village, a spot now so bleak and uninviting, young Samson grew up, amidst plentiful discourse about border forays, and constant sight and sound of danger from the hated foe: a fit school for such a lad. Many a time must he have gone, as a little child, with his mother to the spring, and walked back up the steep half-mile beside her, as she carried her water-jar on her head, to

[1] Josh. xv. 33.

[2] Matt. xxiii. 27.

supply the household; for mothers in Palestine, as elsewhere, like to have their growing boys at their side when they go abroad. It speaks of troublous times that a village should have been perched so high, instead of nestling in the broad, flat valley below; but the landscape may have been cheerier in those days than it is now, for the ruins of ancient towns or villages crown nearly every hill-top round; over thirty being found within a circle of three miles from Zorah. So populous was the country once; so desolate is it to-day.

Three miles off to the south-west, on the south side of the great valley, 800 feet above the sea, and thus nearly 400 feet below Zorah, young Samson had before him the village of Tibnah—then Timnath [1]—which was for a time all the world to him, for the maiden who had won his heart lived there. Ruined walls, caves, wine-presses, and rock-cut cisterns are all that remains of it, unless we count the spring, north of the site, to and from which Samson's betrothed must often have borne her water-jar in those old days. The local and Oriental colouring of the Scripture story of the marriage [2] and its incidents is perfect. Samson, we read, "went down" to Timnath—for it lay lower than Zorah, as we have seen. It was then a Philistine village, and the Philistines had dominion over Israel at that time. As now, the lover could not himself manage the courtship; his father and mother must break the ice, by getting his sweetheart for him; must learn the dowry to be given for her, and consent to pay it. The betrothal arranged, parents and son were free to go together to Timnath, and, for the first time, Samson got leave to talk with his future wife. The incident of the swarm of bees in the dried-up skeleton of the lion is also true to local experience. A dead camel is often found so

[1] Josh. xv. 10; Judg. xiv. 5. [2] Judg. xiv. 1 ff.

dried up by the summer heat, before putrefaction has begun, that the mummy remains permanently unaltered, without any corrupt smell.[1] Such a withered and dry shell of a dead beast would offer to wild bees a very fit place for storing their honey, accustomed as they are to use hollow trees, or clefts in the rocks, for hives. Even in England wrens and sparrows have been known to make their nest in the dried body of a crow or hawk nailed up on a barn-door,[2] and instances are recorded of hornets using the skull of a dead camel for their hive.[3] As to the lion: a few years ago the carcass of one was brought into Damascus, and lion-bones have been found in the gravel of the Jordan,[4] while in the Bible there are five different words for the animal at different stages of growth, and of these, three — Laish, Lebaoth, and Arieh[5] — are used as names of places, apparently from lions haunting the neighbourhood.

Marriage feasts still continue for seven days,[6] as Samson's did, amidst songs, dances, and rough jollity, in which putting and answering riddles forms a prominent part. It would seem, further, from Samson's being allowed to see his betrothed before marriage, that the marriage feast was something like that now found among the peasants of the Haurân: its scene, the open-air threshing-floor; the company, made up of "friends of the bridegroom," of whom the parents of Samson's wife provided the feast with as many as thirty;[7] the bride and bridegroom sitting, rudely crowned, as king and queen of the sports, on the threshing-sledge, as a mock throne, till at

[1] Rosenmüller, *A. u. N. Morgenland*, iii. 46.
[2] Tristram, *Nat. Hist. Bible*, p. 324.
[3] *Land and Book*, p. 566.
[4] Tristram, *Nat. Hist. Bible*, p. 117.
[5] Judg. xviii. 4; Josh. xv. 32; xix. 6; 2 Kings xv. 25.
[6] Riehm, p. 338. [7] Judg. xiv. 11.

the close of the week husband and wife find themselves once more poor hard-working peasants.[1] That the whole party at Samson's wedding were little better than peasants is clear from their distress at the thought of losing a shirt and an outer tunic apiece. "Have you invited us," was their taunt to the bride, "only to take from us our property?"[2] Marriage feasts often end now, as they did in this case, in quarrels and even bloodshed.

Samson's revenge for his wife being stolen from him and married to another man took, as we may remember, a form strange to Western ideas, and yet this too, on the spot, must have seemed quite in keeping with local ways and circumstances. The great valley of Sorek, with its broad swells of rich land stretching away, wave on wave, and the slopes of the distant hills at its sides, must have been covered for many miles in every direction with a sea of corn, which in the hot summer, as harvest approached, would be like so much tinder. Any one who has travelled in Palestine at this season must have noticed the rigorous precautions taken against a conflagration, so certain to be widely disastrous where no walls or hedges separate the fields; there being great danger, in fact, of the flames spreading over the whole landscape. It would be easy for Samson to get any number of jackals, by the abundant help he could command as a local hero, if not already "judge." The howls of these animals by night, in every part of Palestine, show how common they are even now, and in Samson's time they must have been much more so, as different places bore names given from the numbers of these pests in their neighbourhood. We have "the Land of Shual"[3]—that is, "the Jackal Country"

[1] Dr. J. G. Wetstein in Delitzsch's *Hoheslied*, p. 162 ff.
[2] Judg. xiv. 15.
[3] 1 Sam. xiii. 17.

—apparently near to Bethel; Hazar-shual, or "Jackal Town,"[1] and Shaalabbin—"the City of Jackals"—a town of Dan, Samson's own tribe.[2] For Maralah,[3] in Zebulon, on the north, the Syriac, moreover, reads, "the Hill of Jackals." Indeed, the constant mention of snares, nets, pits, &c., in the Bible, shows that wild creatures of all kinds must have been much more numerous than they now are, though some kinds, jackals among them, still abound.

Looking down to the south from Zorah, the site of Bethshemesh, to which the lowing kine dragged the cart on which had been put the sacred ark of the Hebrews, is in full view. It is two miles from Zorah, and lies about 250 feet lower. Heaps of stones, and ruined walls that seem modern, speak of a former village, while foundations and walls of good masonry, apparently more ancient, mark a low swell to the west. Add to these some rock-cut tombs, half buried; a few olives to the east; a tomb of some unknown Mussulman saint—and you have all that remains of Bethshemesh, unless you include a set of dry stone huts, with roofs of boughs, for shelter to harvestmen in the reaping season. The old name, which means "the House of the Sun," is now changed to "Ain Shems," "the Fountain of the Sun"—living water being found in the valley below. Both point to the Philistine sun-worship, and both names are fitting, for every sun "house" or temple needed, like all other ancient sanctuaries, a fountain near it, to supply water for ablutions and libations. The village looks down the wide valley of Sorek, which trends to the north-east, so that the men of Bethshemesh, then busy reaping their

[1] Josh. xv. 28; xix. 3; 1 Chron. iv. 28; Neh. xi. 27.

[2] Josh. xix. 42.

[3] Josh. xix. 11. See the whole subject treated with wonderful learning in Bochart's *Hierozoicon*, p. 854 ff.

wheat, could see from afar the kine dragging the cart with the ark[1] towards them, up the rough track from Ekron. Their little hill-town, like Zorah, was a frontier settlement of the Hebrews in those days, and right glad must all hearts have been to welcome the national palladium once more among its own people.

[1] 1 Sam. vi. 12 ff.

CHAPTER VI.

LOCALITIES FAMOUS IN DAVID'S LIFE.

About four miles to the south, over the hills, we pass from Samson's country to a district famous in the history of David. An old Roman road leads part of the way; for indeed such roads run in all directions through these hills, as the English roads run through the Scotch Highlands; the first object of the conquerors having been to secure order and quiet in the land. When this faint trace of a road fails, a track leads to the Wady es Sunt, which is no other than the valley of Elah,[1] the scene of David's memorable conflict with the gigantic Goliath.[2] Saul had marched down with his militia from Benjamin, by one of the lines of valleys afterwards utilised for various Roman roads from the mountains to the sea-plain, and had encamped on the low hills bordering the Wady es Sunt—or "the Valley of the Acacia." Meanwhile the Philistines were marshalled at Ephes-Dammin, on the other side of the valley, down the centre of which ran a deep ravine cut by winter torrents, forming a small wady within the greater. The rival armies covered the opposing slopes; the natural trench in the middle forming a barrier between them. For forty days the Philistine champion had advanced from the west side, his huge lance in his hand, his brazen helmet and armour glittering in the sun, and

[1] 1 Sam. xvii. 2. [2] 1 Sam. xvii. 4.

had shouted his challenge to the Hebrews, without anyone venturing to accept it. On the fortieth day, however, a mere stripling, low of stature, but of fine features, and with only the common coat or blouse of a shepherd-boy, made his way towards him from across the valley, with nothing in his hands but a shepherd's staff and a goat's-hair sling. The indignation of the haughty warrior at the approach of such an adversary was unbounded. Was he a dog that a boy should come to him with a stick? Stormy curses on so poor a foe, showered forth in the name of all his gods, relieved his fury. But David knew his own purpose, which was no less than an inspiration of genius. Accustomed, as a shepherd-lad, to the sling, so that he could hit any object with it, never missing, he would stun the Philistine with a pebble hurled full force at his forehead, and then kill him before he recovered consciousness. Slings are still in use among shepherds in Palestine, not only to drive off wild animals but to guide their flocks. A stone cast on this side or that, before or behind, drives the sheep or goats as the shepherd wishes. It was the familiar weapon of hunters,[1] and also of light-armed fighting men,[2] especially among the Benjamites, whose skill was famous.[3] A good slinger could hit at 600 paces,[4] and hence at a short distance the force of the blow given must have been very great. The terrible whiz of a sling-stone, and the distance it flew, have, indeed, made it a symbol of final and wrathful rejection by God. "The souls of thy enemies," said the politic Abigail to David himself, at a later period, "shall Jehovah sling out, as out of the middle of a sling."[5] Trusting in his God, the brave boy picked up five pebbles from

[1] Job xli. 28.
[2] 2 Chron. xxvi. 14.
[3] Judg. xx. 16; 1 Chron. xii. 2.
[4] Riehm, p. 1410.
[5] 1 Sam. xxv. 29.

the bed of the water-course, when he had made his way down its steep side, and, having crossed the rough stony channel, he clambered up the other bank; then, putting a pebble in his sling, he stood before the Philistine. Furious words, followed by strides towards the lad, seemed ominous of his fate, but a moment more sent the stone into Goliath's forehead, and he sank insensible. The sequel we all know. Seeing their champion fall without any apparent cause, for the design of David could not have been suspected, a panic seized the Philistines, and they fled in wild disorder to the mouth of the valley, where, if Captain Conder be right, Gath stood towering on its white chalk cliff, the frontier fortress of Philistia, commanding the high road to the corn-lands of Judah and the vineyards of Hebron.

All the localities mentioned in this exciting narrative lie very close together. "Socoh, which belonged to Judah," is Shuweikeh, a heap of ruins, about 1,150 feet above the sea, on the south slopes of Wady es Sunt; and Ephes-Dammin, "the Bloody Boundary"—so called, doubtless, from some fierce combat there—may be some ruins a little higher up the wady, now called Beit Fased.

About two miles to the south of the scene of David's triumph the Palestine Surveyors appear to have discovered the Cave of Adullam, so famous in the after-life of the Hebrew king. It lies in a round hill about 500 feet high, pierced with a number of caverns, the hill itself being isolated by several valleys and marked by ancient ruins, tombs, and quarryings. At its foot are two old wells of special antiquity, one measuring eight to ten feet in diameter, not unlike the wells at Beersheba, and surrounded, as those are, by numerous stone water-troughs. Near these wells, under the shadow of the hill which

towers aloft, a veritable natural stronghold, are other ruins, to which the peasants give the name of Aid-el-Ma, which is identical with the Hebrew Adullam.[1] Such a verification seems to mark the spot as, beyond question, that in which the famous cave should be found, for it was near the royal city of Adullam, and the ruins on the hill-top may well be those of that place.[2] Here then, apparently, it was that there gathered round David "everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented:"[3] a motley crew out of which to create a reliable force.

The road from Hebron to the plains passes the hill, winding along the valley of Elah, here called Wady es Sir, from the side of which the hill of Adullam rises, the road continuing down the valley, which is called Wady es Sunt from Socoh to the plains. Other roads trend off in different directions, marking Aid-el-Ma as an important centre of communication in former ages.

A cave which completes the identification exists in the hill, which in fact is pierced by many natural caverns. It is not necessary to suppose that the one used by David was of great size, for such spacious recesses are avoided by the peasantry even now, from their dampness and tendency to cause fever. Their darkness, moreover, needs many lights, and they are disliked from the numbers of scorpions and bats frequenting them. The caves used as human habitations, at least in summer, are generally about twenty or thirty paces across, lighted by the sun, and comparatively dry. I have often seen such places with their roofs blackened by smoke: families lodging in one, goats, cattle, and sheep stabled in another, and grain or straw stored in a third. At Adullam there are two

[1] *Tent Work in Palestine*, p. 277. [2] Jos. *Ant.*, vi. 12, 3.
[3] 1 Sam. xxii. 2.

such caves on the northern slope of the hill, and another farther south, while the opposite sides of the tributary valley are lined with rows of caves, all smoke-blackened, and mostly inhabited, or used as pens for flocks and herds. The cave on the south of the hill itself was tenanted by a single family when the surveyors visited it, just as it might have been by David and his immediate friends, while his followers housed themselves in those near at hand.[1]

The whole neighbourhood, indeed, is intensely interesting. About three miles south-east of Adullam, among hills 1,500 feet high, is Keilah, a town of Judah, which David rescued from an attack of the Philistines, who had fallen upon it at the beginning of the harvest and carried off its cattle, and the corn from the threshing-floors.[2] They had come up the valley of Elah, from the plain, to these highland corn-fields, which lay at their mercy year by year. The broad valley is, for the greater part of its course, over a mile across, and the rich arable ground, watered by brooks and springs, offers in spring-time a wide landscape of green corn-fields and brown furrows, and in harvest a great undulating sea of yellow grain. Of old, as now, the villager lived in the hills for safety; the peasantry coming down to the valley to till their fields. As long as the Philistines held Gath, if Tell es Safieh be that city, they could ascend the great valley to the richest corn-land of Judah; or if they chose to keep on to the east, the road lay open to them to Jerusalem itself, while by turning south just beyond Bethshemesh, up a broad valley running into the valley of Elah, they could reach Keilah.

The Wady es Sunt, or "the Valley of the Acacia,"

[1] *Pal. Reports*, 1875, p. 148 ff

[2] 1 Sam. xxiii. 1.; Jos. *Ant.*, vi. 13, 1.

runs east and west from the valley of Elah, Socoh lying at its eastern end; and thus looking, north and south, into Elah, and west, up the Valley of the Acacia. Goliath must have come with the Philistines up the valley running south from Bethshemesh; while the main line of communication between the territory of Benjamin and the Acacia Valley led Saul straight towards them.

The terebinths, from which the valley of Elah takes its name, still cling to their ancient soil. On the west side of the valley, near Socoh, there is a very large and ancient tree of this kind, known as "the Terebinth of Wady Sur," fifty-five feet in height, its trunk seventeen feet in circumference; and the breadth of its shade no less than seventy-five feet. It marks the upper end of the Elah valley, and forms a noted object, being one of the largest terebinths in Palestine, and standing so as to be conspicuous from a long distance. Two or three more still dot the course of the valley, but only at wide intervals. The glory of Elah in this respect is gone.

After the massacre of the priests at Nob, Keilah became the refuge of Abiathar, who brought with him the Sacred Ephod, the oracle constantly consulted by the Hebrew kings. When he retired from Gath, after his first residence there, David had taken his position at Adullam, which was the strongest post in the region specially exposed to Philistine inroads. After a time he fled to Hareth, which seems to have been high up on some lofty hills south from Adullam, and a little over a mile from the lower-lying Keilah. From this he went down to that village—then a place defended with walls, bars, and gates,[1] and offering the attraction of Abiathar's presence. He soon learned, however, that the bands of Saul were near at hand, and that the townspeople intended

[1] 1 Sam. xxiii. 7.

to betray him to them. How he escaped from this supreme danger seems to be hinted in the Eighteenth Psalm, in which he thanks God that, by His help, he had run through a troop, and had leaped over a wall.[1] But such feats would be comparatively easy to one who could speak, as David does, of his being like a hind for swiftness, and able to break a steel bow with his hands.[2]

Yet the sortie from Keilah must have been a wild affair. The steep sides of the hill on which it stood were in those days terraced and covered with corn; immense labour having been expended to make the huge, step-like walls behind which it grew. There are now no trees; but perhaps, as at Bethlehem, they then rose here and there on the terraces. To break out with such of his troop of 600 men as were quartered in the town, letting themselves down from the wall, and then mustering for a rush through the force hemming them in, must have made strange excitement in the dark night in which, one would suppose, it was carried out. Then came the swift flight in as good order as possible, past the well at the foot of the hill; past another well farther down the narrow valley, and on till the strath broadens into green fields, edged with low scrub-covered hills. They must have fled towards the Valley of the Terebinths—the valley of Elah—thankful to escape, and at last hiding, it may be, in some of the deep gorges into which one looks down from the hill-sides. The "yaar," or wood, of Hareth, overhanging Keilah, would be too close at hand to offer safe shelter.

A fine view of the whole district is to be had from Tell Zakariyah, a round hill about 800 feet high, on the north side of Wady es Sunt. Orchards of olives, figs, and other trees, clothe the slopes, which rise on each side of a network of valleys in every direction. The great wady stretches

[1] Ps. xviii. 29. [2] Ps. xviii. 33, 34.

out at one's feet like a majestic stream, so sharply are its sides bounded by the enclosing hills and mountains, and so proportionately broad throughout is the valley itself. The course of the valley, from the east to the north-west, is visible for a long distance. It is easy to see how readily the Philistines, mounting from the plains, could penetrate where they chose among the upper glens, and why on this account the Hebrews had so often met them in fierce strife in this neighbourhood. The ruins of Socoh, with its huge terebinth, lie about five miles to the east; and the slopes and bare hills on both sides of the wady, on which the opposing forces had stood arrayed, are spread out like a picture, with the deep ravine of the winter torrents between them, in the middle of the valley. The hills west of Tell Zakariyah, and on both sides of the Acacia Valley—Es Sunt—are very desolate; but they seem, from the ruins on them, to have once been inhabited. Ancient caves and broken cisterns are frequent in the lower levels. Wild sage, in its usual abundance, covers large tracts; but a few flocks of goats and a few camels, seeking doubtful pasture on the slopes, are, with their guardians, the only living creatures to be seen.

From Tell Zakariyah the route lay down the broad Wady Akrabeh, into which we turned from the Wady es Sunt. For more than half an hour the path lay over freshly-ploughed land, very wearisome to cross, but at last we reached the track leading from Ajjur, west, to Tell es Safieh, the goal of our journey for the time. Men on camels and horses passed at times; and a peasant who was ploughing—of course a Mahommedan—hurled curses at us as infidels, but we took no notice.

Tell es Safieh rises proudly to a height of 695 feet above the plain, on its eastern edge: a lofty watch-tower of the land, and a position of fatal importance

against the Hebrews when it was held by the Philistines, since it commands the entrance to the great valley of Elah, a broad high-road into the heart of the mountains. It sinks steeply on nearly every side. On the east and north, narrower or wider glens isolate it from the hilly landscape, in which it forms a ridge of some length, with the highest point to the south. On a plateau 300 feet high, the sides nearly precipitous except at one point, and known from their white limestone as the "Shining Cliff," is the village of El-Safieh, to which the ascent is made by a slanting spur on the north-east. As usual, we sought out the dwelling of the sheikh, which was humble enough, though he is thought rich and powerful; but it offered us a very grateful shelter.

Towards evening the men of the village assembled at the sheikh's to see the strangers, and, if invited, to join in supper, which followed soon after sunset. We sat down to the meal on the floor, in two long rows; the natives cross-legged, we with our legs out before us. Two dishes were brought in, the one a strongly-spiced preparation of wheat-meal; the other odorous of cut leeks and onions. For spoons we had to use pieces of freshly-baked thin scones, eating the spoon as well as its contents after each mouthful. Four of us dipped into the same dish, reminding me of the words of our Lord, "He that dippeth his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me."[1] After eating, most of the men went out to pray before the door, with their faces to Mecca; this over, they came in again, and we all drew round a fire of thorns and brush in the middle of the floor: pleasant and needful in the cool night. How abundant thorns or prickly shrubs and trees are in Palestine, may be judged from the fact that there are a dozen words in the Bible for such growths.

[1] Matt. xxvi. 23.

All hot countries, indeed, abound in thorny vegetation, which is the result of the leaves being left undeveloped through want of water, in such a high temperature; for thorns are only abortive leaves. When dry they are necessarily very inflammable, as in fact everything is in the hot summer or autumn, as the Hebrews knew to their cost from the earliest times.[1] Allusions to their being used as fuel are frequent in Scripture. "Before your pots can feel the thorns," says the Psalmist, "He shall take them [or whirl them] away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in His wrath,"[2] a verse which apparently means that the whirlwind of God's wrath will carry off the wicked as a storm-wind carries away both the burning and the yet unkindled thorns, before the pots have felt their heat, which, with such swiftly-kindling fuel, they would do almost at once. The fire of thorns, bright for a moment, but speedily sinking and quenched if fresh fuel be not added, is used as a comparison for the fate of the nations who, in one of the Psalms, are said to compass the sacred writer about.[3] The laughter of the fool, says Ecclesiastes, is like the crackling of thorns under a pot.[4] In an Arab tent you are pretty sure to see a pile of thorns in one corner to keep alight the tent-fire. In a country like Palestine, moreover, it is a yearly custom to set fire to the thorns on the plains and hill-sides after the harvest has been secured, just as the furze is burned on our own hill-sides, to clear the ground and enrich the soil with the wood-ashes. A time is chosen when the wind is high and blows from a direction which will not spread the flames dangerously, and then a match kindles a conflagration which soon extends for miles, lighting up the night with a wild brightness.

[1] Ex. xxii. 6. Ps. lviii. 9.
[2] Ps. cxviii. 12.
[3] Eccles. vii. 6.

Wherever a tent is pitched in the open wilderness, fires of thorns are speedily ablaze after sunset, at once to give heat, to shed light, of which Easterns are passionately fond, and to scare away thieves and wild animals. It is a terrible picture of swift and helpless destruction when Nahum says of the Assyrians, "While they be folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry."[1] In many parts thorns are so matted and tangled together as to be impenetrable. The Assyrians might boast of being unapproachable, like these; they might boast in their cups that no power could harm them, yet they would be no more before the flames of the wrath of Jehovah than stubble or thorns withered to tinder by the sun.[2]

The enactment of Moses alluded to on the preceding page, that "if fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field, be consumed therewith, he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution,"[3] refers to other uses of these plants. In ancient times thorns were often made into hedges round gardens near towns, as they still are,[4] and they grow wild, not only round all patches of grain in the open country, but largely, too, among them. Watchmen are kept, as harvest approaches, with the duty of guarding against fire as one of their chief cares. With the thorns, dry, tall weeds and grass are intermingled, and a spark falling on these sweeps the whole into a flame to which the ripe grain can offer no resistance, being itself inflammable as tinder. Moses required only restitution of the value destroyed, but the Arabs of the present day are not so lenient. "In returning to Tiberias," says Burckhardt, "I was several times reprimanded by my guide for not taking care of the lighted

[1] Nah. i. 10.
[2] Geikie, *Hours with the Bible*, v. p. 118.
[3] Ex. xxii. 6.
[4] Ecclus. xxviii. 24.

tobacco that fell from my pipe. The whole of the mountain is thickly covered with dry grass, which readily takes fire, and the slightest breath of air instantly spreads the conflagration far over the country, to the great risk of the peasant's harvest. The Arabs who inhabit the valley of the Jordan invariably put to death the person who is known to have been even the innocent cause of firing the grass, and they have made a public law among themselves that even in the height of intestine warfare no one shall attempt to set an enemy's country on fire. One evening while at Tiberias I saw a large fire on the opposite side of the lake, which spread with great velocity for two days, till its progress was checked by the Wady Feik."[1]

The evening passed very pleasantly in conversation, smoking, and drinking coffee. Everyone was friendly, and I felt myself as safe as if I had been in my own house. One could fancy that our Divine Master must often have passed the evening in just such a house: the mud divan or bench along the wall, His seat, as it was ours, and the wood fire crackling as brightly in the centre of the chamber. The goats in the little courtyard had early ascended to the roof, their sleeping-place, by the rude steps outside the house, and the human guests left, one by one, about nine—even the sheikh retiring; so that we remained alone, except for some tired peasants, who stretched themselves out on the mats, and covered themselves with their outer garment. There could be no better comment on the Mosaic law: "If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment [upper garment] to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: for that is his only covering, it is his outer garment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep?"[2] The law is conceived in the

[1] Burckhardt, pp. 331, 2.

[2] Ex. xxii. 26 27; Deut. xxiv. 13; Job xxii. 6; xxiv. 10.

same merciful spirit that prohibited an upper millstone from being taken in pledge.[1]

After a time the fire died out, but a feeble oil-lamp still gave some light. This went out about midnight, but it was our fault. No house, however poor, is left without a light burning in it all night; the housewife rising betimes to secure its continuance by replenishing the lamp with oil. If a lamp go out, it is a fatal omen. "The light of the wicked," says Bildad, "shall be put out . . . . . the light shall be dark in his tent, and his lamp, above him, shall be put out."[2] "The light of the righteous rejoices," says the Book of Proverbs, "but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out."[3] "How often is the candle [lamp] of the wicked put out!" cries Job.[4] Jeremiah, painting the ruin impending over his country, can find no more touching metaphor than that God would "take from it the light of the candle" [lamp];[5] and St. John repeats, as part of the doom of the mystical Babylon, that "the light of a candle [lamp] shall shine no more at all in it."[6] The promise to David, implying the permanence of his line, was that Jehovah would give him a lamp for his sons always.[7]

Morning is always interesting in the East. As we walked through the very narrow lanes among the houses, the people were driving their camels, sheep, and goats afield. Here and there a man was on his way to his daily work, with his plough on his shoulder. A strong castle once stood on the highest point of the hill, the Blanche Garde—"the White Guard"—of the Crusaders, built by them in A.D. 1144 as a defence against the inhabitants of Ascalon. Only a few stones of its walls now remain; the

[1] Deut. xxiv. 6. [2] Job xviii. 5, 6 (R.V.). [3] Prov. xiii. 9.
[4] Job xxi. 17. [5] Jer. xxv. 10. [6] Rev. xviii. 23.
[7] 2 Kings viii. 19; 1 Kings xv. 4; xi. 36.

rest have been carried off to various towns as building material. The view from the hill-top was magnificent. The mountains of Judah rose grandly, step above step, from north-east to south-west. Nearly straight north, beyond a magnificent expanse of fertile plain, the lofty tower of Ramleh was distinctly visible, and the same vast expanse of plain stretched out to the south; while on the west, the deep blue of the Mediterranean reached away to join the rich sapphire of the skies. Over twenty smaller or larger villages and hamlets were within view, but there were no habitations between them; want of security compelling every one to live in some community. Hence, after all, the population was very limited.

As we descended to the plain by the western side, which is partly terraced, many doves flew round us. These rock pigeons are found in considerable numbers in the clefts of the hill-sides of Palestine, and are often alluded to in the Bible. "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rocks," says the Beloved.[1] "O ye that dwell in Moab," cries Jeremiah, "leave the cities, and dwell in the rock, and be like the dove that maketh her nest in the sides of the hole's mouth."[2] There are many large caves on the north side of the hill, and some excavations which are used for storing grain. Water is procured chiefly from a well in a valley to the north. There are no masonry remains on the village table-land.

Tell es Safieh is thought by Capt. Conder and Prof. Porter to be the site of the Philistine city of Gath, and as I looked back at it, with its lofty plateau, now occupied by the village we had left, such a natural fortress seemed wonderfully suited for a strong city. Defended by walls and gates, it must have been almost impregnable in ancient times. It is not, indeed, certain that the identification

[1] Cant. ii. 14. [2] Jer. xlviii. 28.

is correct, for the old name has not been found associated with the spot; but, apart from this, probabilities are very much in its favour. If it be the old Gath, what memories cluster round the spot! Here, and at Gaza and Ashdod, gathered the remnant of the huge race known in the early history of Palestine as the giants. Goliath, a towering man-mountain, nine feet high,[1] once walked through its lanes, then perhaps not unlike those we had left, and so too, it may be, did Ishbibenob—"my seat is at Nob"[2]—the head of whose spear[3] weighed 300 shekels of brass—about eight pounds—only half as heavy, however, as Goliath's—and the other three sons "born to the giant in Gath."[4] These colossal warriors seem to have been the last of their race, which we do not need to conceive of as all gigantic, but only as noted for boasting some extra tall men among a people famous for their stature. The Goths in old times were spoken of in the same way by their contemporaries as a race of giants, but though they were huge compared with the populations they invaded, giants were a very rare exception among them, as among other nations.

It was to Gath that David fled, after Saul had massacred the priests at Nob for giving him food. It lay nearest the mountains of Judah, and was easily reached, down the great Wady Sorek, or Elah, the mouth of which it commanded, if Tell es Safieh be Gath. But his reception, at least by the retainers of Achish, the king of this part of the Philistine territory, was far from encouraging, as indeed was not wonderful, remembering his fame among their enemies the Hebrews, and his triumph over

[1] Thenius.

[2] Thenius suggests an emendation which would make the name mean—"he who dwells on the height."

[3] Vulg., "iron of the spear."

[4] 2 Sam. xxi. 22.

their great champion Goliath. The Fifty-sixth Psalm, ascribed to this period, describes his position as almost desperate. His "enemies were daily like to swallow him up; they wrested his words; they marked his steps; they lay in wait to take his life."[1] Under these circumstances he very naturally had recourse to any stratagem that promised him safety, and hence, knowing the popular reverence for those mentally affected, pretended he was insane. Superstitious awe for such as are so is still common in the East. I myself saw a lunatic, full-fed and bulky, with nothing on but a piece of rough matting round his waist, walking over the bridge of boats at Constantinople, followed by a crowd who treated him with the utmost reverence. Insane persons dangerous to society are kept in confinement in Egypt, but those who are harmless wander about and are regarded as saints.[2] Most of the reputed holy men on the Nile are, indeed, either lunatics, idiots, or impostors. Some of them may be seen eating straw, not unfrequently mixed with broken glass, seeking to attract observation by this and other strange acts, and earning from the ignorant community by these extravagances the title of a "welee," or favourite of Heaven.[3] David, therefore, had method in the madness which he feigned when driven to extremities in Gath. But after such an experience, and especially after the fatal march to Jezreel, which ended in the death of Saul and Jonathan, it is not wonderful that he set himself determinedly to break down the Philistine power, so as to free Israel from constant peril. While he was carrying out this vital object Gath fell into his hands,[4] and continued to be a Hebrew fortress for some generations.[5] Under Hazael of Damascus, however, we find it added to the

[1] Ps. lvi. 2, 5, 6. [2] Lane, *Modern Egyptians*, i. 291. [3] *Ibid.*, i. 291, 292.
[4] 1 Chron. xviii. 1. [5] 2 Chron. xi. 8.

Syrian dominions,[1] but Uzziah retook and destroyed it, so that from that time, 2,700 years ago, it vanishes from history, a short allusion to it by the Prophet Micah excepted.[2]

On his second flight to Gath, some years later, David seems to have fared better. Achish appears to have persuaded his people that it was a highly politic step to welcome, as an ally, one so famous in the past as an enemy. In keeping with this, and to remove him from possible collision with the fighting men of Gath, a village was given him—Ziklag—deep in the south country of Judah, where he would at once be useful, as was no doubt thought, in defending the Philistine territory from attacks in that direction, and safely remote from the centre of the little kingdom. Once in his distant exile, he must have found himself committed to a war of defence against the lawless Amalekites—restless, tent-dwelling Bedouins, who lived by plunder, and had always been the enemies of the Hebrews.[3] He may have found these fierce marauders raiding against the south country of Judah and the local Arab tribes related to Israel by blood, and thus it may have been true enough when he told Achish that he had been fighting in those parts; the Philistine at once concluding that he had been attacking the Hebrews.

The plains round Blanche Garde are famous for some of the most romantic deeds of Richard the Lion-hearted, but they are silent enough now. The landscape rises and falls in low swells; fallows alternating with sown fields; the soil nearly black, and evidently very fruitful. These great plains of Philistia and Sharon may yet have a future, if the curse of God, in the form of Turkish rule, be removed. The gardens at Joppa show what glorious vegetation water and industry can create, even where the

[1] 2 Kings xii. 17. [2] Mic. i. 10. [3] 1 Sam. xxvii. 8.

invading sand has to be fought, and we may imagine what results similar irrigation and industry would create over the wide expanse. The scarcity of wood is the one feature that lessens the general charm, for excepting the orchards and olive-groves, often very small, round isolated villages, there are no trees. So much is this the case indeed that here, as in Egypt, the only fuel in many parts for cooking or heating, if there be no thorns, is dried camel or cow dung made into cakes. Children, especially girls, may be seen eagerly gathering the materials for it, wherever found, or kneading them into disks, which are then stuck against a wall, or laid out on the earth to dry.[1] In use, however, this fuel is not at all objectionable, for it emits no disagreeable smell, and communicates no bad taste to food prepared with it. In its burning it is very like peat, as it may well be, since both are really only so much woody fibre.

The little village of Tell et Turmus lies about six miles nearly west from Tell es Safieh, on a low rise of ground. Near at hand is a deep, well-built cistern, covered by a low dome; a channel connecting it with a tank close by, about three feet deep, which is filled, to save labour and time in watering the flocks and herds, not very numerous in such a community. The houses were no longer built, as in the hills, of limestone, but of unburnt bricks, made of black earth mixed with stubble. A few men sat about, as usual, idly gossiping, though it was morning—the best time to work.

The road to Ashdod from Tell et Turmus is along the bottom of a series of swelling waves of land, which trend to the north-west, three small villages forming the only population. The plain is seamed with dry watercourses or wadys, worn deep by winter torrents. This is the

[1] Ezek. iv. 15.

characteristic of nearly all streams in Palestine. During the winter months, when useless for irrigation, they are often foaming rivers; but in the hot summer, when they would be of priceless value, their dry bed is generally the road from one point to another. The bare sides of the hills, in many cases long ago denuded of all soil, retain very little of the tremendous rain-storms that break at times over them, in winter or even spring. The water rushes over the sheets of rock as it would from the roof of a house, and converging, as it descends, into minor streams in the higher wadys, these sweep on to a common channel in some central valley, and, thus united, swell in an incredibly short time into a deep, troubled, roaring flood, which fills the whole bottom of the wady with an irresistible torrent. Some friends, caught in a storm in Samaria, told me they had to flee from their tents to higher ground, while still half-dressed, to escape the sweep of the stream which they knew would presently overwhelm the spot on which their tents had been pitched. The same thing, on a greater scale, is seen in the Sinai mountains. "I was encamped," says the Rev. F. W. Holland,[1] "in Wady Feiran, near the base of Jebel Serbal, when a tremendous thunder-storm burst upon us. After little more than an hour's rain the water rose so rapidly in the previously dry wady that I had to run for my life, and with great difficulty succeeded in saving my tent and goods; my boots, which I had not time to pick up, being washed away. In less than two hours a dry desert wady, upwards of 300 yards broad, was turned into a foaming torrent from eight to ten feet deep, roaring and tearing down, and bearing everything before it—tangled masses of tamarisks, hundreds of beautiful palm-trees, scores of sheep and goats, camels and donkeys, and even men, women, and children; for a whole

[1] *Recovery of Jerusalem*, p. 542.

encampment of Arabs was washed away a few miles above me. The storm commenced at five o'clock in the evening; at half-past nine the waters were rapidly subsiding, and it was evident that the flood had spent its force. In the morning a gently-flowing stream, but a few yards broad, and a few inches deep, was all that remained of it. But the whole bed of the valley was changed. Here, great heaps of boulders were piled up where hollows had been the day before; there, holes had taken the place of banks covered with trees. Two miles of tamarisk-wood which was situated above the palm-groves had been completely swept down to the sea." Our Lord must have had such unforeseen and irresistible rain-floods in His mind when He spoke of the foolish man who "built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell;"[1] or as it is repeated in St. Luke, "who, without a foundation, built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell."[2] Job, also, must have had such passing floods in his thoughts when he spoke of his three friends as having "dealt deceitfully as a brook, as the channel of brooks that pass away; which are black by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow hideth itself: what time they wax warm [or shrink], they vanish: when it is hot, they are consumed out of their place."[3] The streams from Lebanon, and also from the high mountains which the patriarch could see in the north from the Haurân, where he lived, send down great floods of dark and troubled waters in spring, when the ice and snow of their summits are melting; but they dry up under the heat of summer, and the track of the torrent, with its chaos of boulders, stones, and gravel, seems as if it had not known a stream for ages

[1] Matt. vii. 26. [2] Luke vi. 49. [3] Job vi. 15—17.

So Job's friends had in former times seemed as if they would be true to him for ever, but their friendship had vanished like the rush of the torrent that had passed away. The beautiful figure of the Psalmist, to express his longing after God, is familiar to us all: he panted for Him "as the hart panteth after the water-brooks."[1] Hunted on the mountains, and far from any cooling stream, finding, moreover, when it came to a torrent-bed, that the channel offered nothing but heated stones and rocks, how it would pant for some shady hollow, in which, perchance, water might still be found! The Psalm was evidently written in a hilly region, where the sound of water, dashing down the narrow gorge, could be heard from above. As the wearied and thirsty gazelle panted to reach it from the scorching heights, so yearned the soul of the troubled one for its God!

By the way, what does David mean by "deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts: all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me"[2]? Dr. Tristram thinks he alludes to the sound of dashing waters, in such a region as Hermon, where, in times of flood, torrents leap down the hills and resound from the depths.[3] "In winter," writes another, who fancifully imagines the Psalmist a prisoner in the Castle of Banias, "and when the snow is melting in the spring, endless masses of water roar down the gorge of Kashabeh, over which the castle rises about 700 feet. Perhaps it was when the sacred poet, confined within its walls, looking into the awful depth below, listened to the raging and foaming waters, that he uttered these words, at the thought of his distant home." Discarding the imaginary imprisonment, the explanation seems correct. David writes in a land of mountain streams, and feels as if all their thundering

[1] Ps. xlii. 1. [2] Ps. xlii. 7. [3] Tristram, *Israel*, p. 293.

waves had broken over him.[1] Waterspouts in our sense are not alluded to here, though they are common on the sea-coast; nor are they mentioned in the Bible. The word employed in the Psalm is found in only one passage besides, where David promises the command-in-chief to anyone who will clamber up the water-shaft which opened on the plateau of Jerusalem, then called Jebus: a feat performed by Joab.[2]

[1] This is the explanation of Tholuck, Hitzig, Riehm, and Delitzsch.
[2] 2 Sam. v. 8.

CHAPTER VII.

ASHDOD—MEJDEL.

Ashdod, now Esdud, one of the five cities of the Philistines, is only a village, with a very few stone houses (the rest being of mud), one storey high, enclosed in small courts with mud walls. Doors are as a rule a superfluity in Palestine; or at best are represented by ghosts of what may, perhaps, have once been doors. The "town" rises on the slopes of a low swell, itself commanded by one somewhat higher, formerly the site of the castle, but now covered with gardens hedged with tall prickly pear; impenetrable, but hideous, and taking up a great deal of room. This hedge grows over a thick wall of stone, regularly cut and well dressed, beneath which, the peasants aver, they have seen several courses of an ancient wall, of great cut stones. There are, indeed, below and round Ashdod, a number of walls, some of them relics of its old glory. The soil is a half-consolidated sand, light, of course, but fertile; but how long it will remain even as good as at present is a question, since the moving sand-dunes from the sea-coast, two miles and a half off, have come almost to the village, and advance year by year. It is already, indeed, a pitiful sight to notice olives and fig-trees half buried; their owners striving hard, season after season, to shovel away the sand from their trunks, till they stand, in some cases, almost in pits, which would close over them if the efforts to save them were intermitted even for a short time.

In the court before the village mosque lies one last trace of the long past—an ancient sarcophagus, seven feet long, and broad in proportion; its side adorned with sculptured garlands, from which hang bunches of grapes, the emblems of the Promised Land. Long ago some rich Hebrew, doubtless, lay in it; his friends thinking he was safely housed till the last morning. But here stands the coffin—empty for ages! South of the mosque are the ruins of a great mediæval khan, seventy-three steps long on the side, but not so broad; the wall seven feet thick, but not very high. Inside there is an open court, in Arab style, with long galleries, arcades, chambers, and magazines, for a traffic not now existing. Some broken granite pillars lie on the ground, and a marble column serves as threshold at the doorway. The discovery of the passage to India round the Cape of Good Hope destroyed the old overland trade from the East, and the Palestine towns on the caravan route fell with it. Beyond this comparatively modern ruin is a large marsh, from the overflowing of the wadys during the winter; so much water being left behind as still to show itself even as late as April. The water supply of the village is obtained from rain-ponds with mud banks, and a well to the east, from which a camel was drawing up water by the help of a water-wheel. Near it there are a few date-palms and some small figs, and beyond them a small grove of remarkably fine olives. The villagers resemble the Egyptian peasantry, both in dress and appearance, much more than they do their Palestine fellow-countrymen; why, who can accurately tell?

Ashdod was one of the towns inhabited by the remnant of the gigantic Anakim, in the days of Joshua,[1] and gloried in a great temple of Dagon, whose worship had here its

[1] Josh. xi. 22.

head-quarters. This god, half man and half fish,[1] was the national god of the Philistines ; Derketo, a counterpart of Astarte,[2] or Ashtaroth, being his female complement, with Ascalon for her chief seat. Dagon, however, was a purely Assyrio-Babylonian deity ; the Nineveh marbles showing both the name and the fish-man, as described in the Book of Samuel. This union of the human figure and that of a fish apparently arose from the natural association, in a maritime population, of the idea of fecundity with the finny tribes ; Dagon being a symbol of the reproductive power of nature, and having been originally worshipped on the shores of the Persian Gulf, from which, through Chaldæa, the Philistines received the cultus, apparently from the Phœnicians, who came from the Persian Gulf by way of Babylonia.

Ashdod was assigned to the tribe of Judah,[3] but it never came into their possession, and even so late as the time of Nehemiah it was ranked among the cities hostile to Israel.[4] Lying on the great military road between Syria and Egypt, it was an important strategical post from the earliest times. Uzziah took and kept it for a short time,[5] breaking down its walls to prevent its revolt. In the year B.C. 711, about fifty years after Uzziah's death,[6] Sargon of Assyria sent his "tartan," or field-marshal, against the city, which was speedily taken, with the miserable fate of having its population led off to Assyria, some victims of war from the East being settled in their room ; the town was rebuilt to receive them, and incorporated into the Assyrian Empire under an imperial governor. The king, Jaman, had fled, with his wife, his sons, and his daughters, to the

[1] 1 Sam. v. 4 ; see margin.
[2] 1 Sam. xxxi. 10.
[3] Josh. xv. 46.
[4] Amos i. 8 ; Neh. iv. 7.
[5] 2 Chron. xxvi. 6.
[6] B.C. 758.

Ethiopian King[1] in Upper Egypt, but that dignitary handed him back to the Assyrians; the words of Isaiah being terribly fulfilled, "They shall be dismayed and ashamed because of Ethiopia, their expectation, and of Egypt, their glory,"[2] or boast. Poor Jaman's treasures were carried off; his palace burned down; he himself bound hand and foot with iron chains and sent to Assyria.[3]

The Assyrians having strongly fortified Ashdod, its capture was a more difficult task for the next invader, Psammetichus,[4] who besieged it, as Herodotus[5] informs us, for no less than twenty-nine years, and finally, on taking it, left only "a remnant" of its population in the town.[6] Destroyed once more by the Maccabees, in the second century before Christ, it lay in ruins till restored by the Romans, two or three generations later,[7] and was finally given to Herod's sister, Salome, at her brother's death.[8] It was at Ashdod, then called by the Greek name Azotus, that Philip was found, after baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch—the only mention of it in the New Testament. I must not, however, forget the striking episode of the triumphal entrance of the sacred ark of the Hebrews to the old Philistine city, after the battle of Ebenezer. To capture the gods of any people was supposed, in antiquity, to deprive their worshippers of the divine protection hitherto vouchsafed them, for local gods were powerless outside their own land. But as the Hebrews had no idols, the sacred ark, which they evidently regarded as securing the presence of their God, appeared a full equivalent. With this in their hands, the Philistines

[1] Oppert says "Lybia." Lenormant fancies it was to a petty prince in the Delta that the poor king fled. (Geikie, *Hours with the Bible*, iv. 396.)

[2] Isa. xx. 5 (R.V.).

[3] *Sargon's Annals, passim.*

[4] B.C. 666—612 (Brugsch).

[5] Herod. ii. 157.

[6] Jer. xxv. 20.

[7] B.C. 55.

[8] Jos. *Ant.*, xiv. 5, 3; xvii. 8, 1; *Bell. Jud.*, i. 7, 7.

thought they need fear Israel no longer; they had cut off the source of Divine aid; the Hebrews lay at their mercy, helpless without a God. Priests in their vestments, choirs in their singing robes, players on instruments, in high festival adornment; maidens with their timbrels and graceful dance; the king and his court in their bravest array, went out, we may be sure, through the city gates to meet the fighting men returning with spoil so glorious. The hill, now so quiet under its mantling olives, must have echoed with the shouts of the populace as the ark was borne up to the great temple of Dagon, who had shown himself so much greater than Jehovah by the victory his people had gained, through his help, over the worshippers of the Hebrew God. But we know the sequel; the fallen dishonour of the god of Ashdod on the morrow, prostrate on the earth before the ark, as if to do it homage; the still deeper shame of the following day; the human head and hands of the upper half of the idol cut off and laid on the threshold, as if to profane it, and for ever bar entrance; only the ignominious "fishy-part" left![1] The cry arose to take the ark to Gath at the foot of the mountains, on the other side of the plain; so off it went, on a rude cart which dragged it thither, across wadys, and round the low hills, and through wide corn-lands. But Gath soon found cause to dread the ominous trophy. The citizens demanded that it should be sent to Ekron, eleven miles to the north, to let that city try what it could do with it. There, also, it was soon a terror. For seven months it wrought woe in the land. Once more the cry arose to send it off, but this time cows, instead of oxen, were yoked to the cart which bore it, and their calves kept at home, that the will of the Philistine gods respecting it might be judged from the action of the dumb creatures that were to

[1] 1 Sam. v. 4 (margin).

bear it away. If the milky mothers turned back to their calves, it would be a sign that the ark was yet to stay in the Philistine plain; if they kept on their way up into the hills to the land of the Hebrews, it would be a proof that the gods wished it to be restored to its own people. But the kine went straight south from Ekron, lowing for their calves as they went, yet never turning from their steady advance along the road to the great Wady Surar—the valley of Elah, the steep pass to the Hebrew country in the mountains—never stopping till they had dragged their awful burden far up to the rounded hill 900 feet above the sea, on which stands Bethshemesh, distant at least fifteen miles from Ekron.

The images of the mice and emerods by which the Philistines had been plagued, sent with the ark by the sufferers as votive offerings to propitiate the Hebrew God whom they had offended, are the first of the kind recorded. Other ancient nations, however, were in the habit of hanging up in the temples of their gods small "images" of diseased parts of the body which had been healed, in answer to prayer as they believed, and also small models of whatever had caused them danger or suffering, now averted by the same heavenly aid: a practice still observed in Greek and Roman Catholic churches where silver models of eyes, arms, or legs indicate cures supposed to have been effected by the intercession of particular saints, and small models of ships show deliverance from peril at sea.[1] That the Hebrews hung up the votive

[1] In Herod. i. 105 there is a story about a disease inflicted on the women of Scythia for robbing the temple of Derketo at Ascalon, wonderfully like the plague of emerods on the Philistines; doubtless a distorted tradition of it. Diod. Sic. (i. 22) tells us that models of the missing members of Osiris were hung up and worshipped in the Egyptian temples. Rosenmüller (*A. und N. Morgenland*, iii. 77) has a very interesting article on this subject. A tablet representing a shipwreck was hung in the temples of Isis and Neptune by

offerings of the Philistines in the new Tabernacle raised at Gibeon, or Nob, after the destruction of the original "Tent of Meeting" at Shiloh by the Philistines, we have, however, no proof, though gifts offered to the Temple seem in later days to have been displayed on its walls.

Passing a little beyond the town to the shade of a large sycamore, close to the ruins of the old khan, we were glad to halt for mid-day refreshment. There was nice grass round the trunk, open tilled ground on one side, and the road, with hedges of prickly pear ten feet high, on the other. A number of the villagers soon gathered round us, entering into the friendliest conversation with my companion, to whom Arabic was familiar. One of them, taking off his wide camels'-hair "abba," spread it, like a broad sheet, on the ground, as a seat; but we fortunately had shawls and coats of our own, and thus, while acknowledging very sincerely the politeness, were able to escape a possible danger not very pleasant to think of. A little girl was sent for water by our friends, and brought it in one of the small brown unglazed pitchers of the country. Courtesy satisfied, all withdrew a short distance and sat down on the ground, the usual resting-place of an Oriental, to look on without rudeness, and, no doubt, to talk about us. Meanwhile we were left in peace to enjoy our lunch—bread, oranges, hard-boiled eggs, and the remains of a chicken—the usual fare in Palestine.

The sycamore under which we sat in delightful shade was a good specimen of a tree very common in Palestine,

those saved from the sea. Models of diseased limbs, &c., are hung up in the temples of India by pilgrims who have journeyed to these sanctuaries to pray for the cure of ailments affecting the parts thus represented. This has been the custom from the immemorial past. Eyes, feet, and hands, in metal, once hung up in Grecian temples, have been found. Juvenal (*Sat.*, x. 55) alludes to the custom as familiar in Rome. See also Horat. *Car.*, i. 6, 13—16, where the clothes of the persons saved are hung up, as well as a picture of the ship

but only on the lowlands of the coast, the Jordan valley, and Lower Galilee. The old name of Haifa, indeed, was Sykaminon, in allusion to the abundance of sycamores in its neighbourhood. The tree grows also in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem and Tekoa,[1] and in Egypt it is very common: a circumstance which has led to the opinion that it must have been introduced in ancient times from that country to the Holy Land. It grows from forty to fifty feet high, with a thick gnarled stem, and numerous strong limbs, which, at a short distance from the ground, strike out horizontally, instead of upwards, as with most other trees; so that Zaccheus, at Jericho, when he wished to see our Lord, could easily climb into a vantage-place on a stout branch. Nothing, indeed, is more common than to find the children of a village amusing themselves by getting up for sport into the branches of any sycamore growing near. Its broad crown, often twenty paces across, makes it an admirable shade-tree; many persons being able to enjoy, at the same time, the delicious coolness of its branches. For this reason it was planted, in Christ's day, along much-frequented roads:[2] a public convenience to which Zaccheus was indebted for the opportunity of which he availed himself.

The fruit of the sycamore grows in clusters on the trunk and the wood of the great branches; not on twigs like the ordinary fig. Striped with clouded white and green, and shaped like the fig, it is more woody, less sweet, and otherwise less pleasant to the taste, nor has it the small seeds in its flesh which we see in the fig. To make the fruit agreeable it needs to be cut open, some days before it is ripe, that part of the bitter juice may run out, and the rest undergo a saccharine fermentation, to sweeten the whole. Only the poorest make this cutting an employ-

[1] 1 Kings x. 27. [2] Luke xvii. 6; xix. 4.

ment, so that when Amos speaks of it as being his calling, he wishes to indicate the lowliness of his social position.[1] The first harvest is gathered about the beginning of June, and from that time till the beginning of winter the tree continues to show both blossoms and fruit, ripe and unripe, so that it is gathered repeatedly in the same season.

The light, but tough and almost imperishable wood of the sycamore caused it to be largely used as building material by the Hebrews, though it was far less prized than the wood of the cedar. That it must have been very plentiful in ancient times is shown by the fact that, to prove the splendour of Solomon's times, he is recorded to have made cedars as the sycamore-trees of the lowlands for abundance.[2] In the same way, the haughty people of Samaria boasted that though the enemy had cut down the sycamores, they would build with cedars.[3] Still, in the general poverty of native timber, the sycamore was of great value to the Hebrews, so that it is natural to read of David's appointing an overseer to take charge of his olive and sycamore woods in the maritime plain.[4]

The track south of Ashdod skirts the edge of the sand-hills, but on the inland side the mountains of Judah rise, ten or twelve miles off, beyond a rolling country, half arable and half pasture. Asses laden with bags of wool passed us on the way from Gaza to Joppa; one or two, also, with great loads of a broom-like plant, used to make ropes for water-wheels or wells. The plough was busy in all directions; and where the light soil invited flocks and herds, the slopes of the low hills were often enlivened by them. But they belonged to wandering tent Arabs, not to the peasantry round; for, just as in Abraham's day, these

[1] Amos vii. 14.
[2] 1 Kings x. 27; 2 Chron. i. 15; ix. 27.
[3] Isa. ix. 10.
[4] 1 Chron. xxvii. 28.

sons of the desert roam through the land as they please, feeding their flocks on the open hill-sides. Our parting at Ashdod had been quite a scene. Venerable greybeards and younger men, all with fine figures and picturesque dress, came to the road and waited till the horses were yoked; bidding us, at last, a friendly farewell, with Western shaking of hands.

As we advanced, the patches of cultivated land increased till as many as twenty ploughs could be seen going at the same time, each drawn by a camel or by small, lean oxen. It reminded one of Elisha, "who was ploughing, with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth,"[1] which means that there were twelve ploughs at work, the twelfth being guided by the prophet himself. Green hills rose in succession, with herds of hundreds of cattle on them—all, still, the property of Arabs, whose black tents were often to be seen in the distance. These nomadic Ishmaelites are in fact immensely rich, according to Eastern ideas; their wealth, like that of the patriarchs, whom they much resemble in their mode of life, consisting of flocks and herds. The plain was seamed, from time to time, with the dry stony beds of winter torrents, in which no water ever flows except after rains. The town of Hamaweh, surrounded by a wide border of gardens, soon came in sight; the white blossom of almond-trees rising like a snowy cloud above the cactus-hedges, which stretched onwards till they joined those of the larger town, El-Mejdel.

The latter place is the capital of the district in which it stands, and boasts a population of 1,500 inhabitants. A small mosque with a tall minaret is its only prominent public building, and the houses are nearly all built of mud, like those of the other towns of the plain;

[1] 1 Kings xix. 19.

a very few of stone being the exception. Deep wells, some of them with the water 120 feet below the surface, provide the means of irrigating the gardens. Camels or oxen raise the fertilising stream by "Persian wheels," or sakiyehs, like those in other places; the various heads of families providing the animals in turn, as the wells are public property. A large rain-pond lies to the east of the village, and a far-stretching cemetery on the west; for death is as busy in one place as in another. There is a great market held in Mejdel every Friday—the Mahommedan Sunday—attracting buyers and sellers from all parts of the plain.

The olive plantations on all sides of the town were very fine. Looking old, however young, so broken and gnarled is their bark, so twisted their short stems; often hollow; often as if covered only with a lace-work of bark; the light greyish-green of their small pointed leaves so faded, with their white under-sides showing in every breath of wind—they are like no other tree that I know. Olive-growing is largely followed in the southern parts of the plain. From Mejdel onwards, the tree covers the slopes of the low hills and the rich plains, making them one vast orchard, for they are not higher than fruit-trees, and are mostly narrower in their round of foliage than ordinary fruit-trees with us. Casting less shade than our apple or pear-trees, and standing wider apart, the wide groves of them, with the soft green underneath, made the whole landscape at times look as lovely and rich as an English park. If Hosea had in his thoughts such a scene as this south of Mejdel he might well say of Israel, when restored to Divine favour, that its "beauty would be as the olive-tree,"[1] just as Jeremiah, at a later date, was to compare its early glory with that of a green olive-tree, fair and of goodly

[1] Hos. xiv. 6.

fruit.[1] Nor could David more vividly picture his future prosperity when delivered from his enemies, according to Hebrew ideas, than by the thought that he would be like one of the green olive-trees which grew in the open court before the House of God—the Tabernacle he had raised in Jerusalem.[2]

The olive was cultivated in Palestine long before the Hebrew invasion, for "olive-trees which thou plantedst not"[3] are enumerated among the good things on which they entered, and it must have been widely cultivated throughout Bible times, from the frequent allusions to it. It is, in fact, and must always have been, in Palestine, as characteristic a feature of the landscape as the date-palm is in Egypt. On the long stretches of bare, stony hill-sides the olive is often the only tree that enlivens the monotony of desolation. Moses and Job hardly used a figure when they spoke of "oil out of the flinty rock,"[4] for olives flourish best on sandy or stony soil, and it is because the Philistine plain consists so largely of consolidated sand that they grow on it so luxuriantly. In ancient times the country must have been dotted everywhere with olive-groves. "Thou shalt have olive-trees," says Moses, "throughout all thy coasts."[5] Asher, on its hills, behind Tyre, and southwards to Kartha, on the coast, below Acre, was to "dip his foot in oil," as it overflowed from the presses.[6] Joel promised that, if the people turned to their God, "the fats should overflow with oil."[7] The olive harvest was, in fact, as important to the Hebrew peasant as that of the vine or of corn; the three being often mentioned together as the staples of the national

[1] Jer. xi. 16.
[2] Ps. lii. 8.
[3] Deut. vi. 11.
[4] Deut. xxxii. 13; Job xxix. 6.
[5] Deut. xxviii. 40.
[6] Deut. xxiii. 24.
[7] Joel ii. 24.

prosperity.[1] It was even so important an element in the royal revenue that David had officers over his stores of oil and his olive-woods. More indeed was raised than could be used for home consumption, whether for cooking, light, worship, or for anointing the person, and hence it was largely exported to Egypt and Phœnicia.[2] "Judah and the land of Israel," says Ezekiel, "traded in thy markets"—those of Tyre—wheat from the Haurân, spices or millet,[3] and honey, and oil, and the resin of the pistachio-tree.[4]

The olive is propagated from shoots or cuttings, which, after they have taken root, are grafted, since otherwise they would grow up "wild olives," and bear inferior fruit. Sometimes, however, a "good" olive from some cause ceases to bear, and in this case a shoot of wild olive—that is, one of the shoots from those which spring up round the trunk—is grafted into the barren tree, with the result that the sap of the good olive turns this wild shoot into a good branch, bearing fruit such as the parent stem should have borne. It is to this practice that St. Paul alludes when he says of the Gentiles, "If some of the branches were broken off, and thou, being a wild olive, wast grafted in among them, and didst become partaker with them of the root and of the fatness of the olive-tree;"[5] and, further, "If thou wast cut out of the olive-tree that is wild by nature, and wast grafted, contrary to

[1] Deut. xxviii. 40; vii. 13; xi. 14; xii. 17; Joel i. 10; ii. 19, 24; 1 Chron. xxvii. 28; 2 Chron. xxxii. 28.

[2] Hos. xii. 1; 1 Kings v. 12; Ezra iii. 7; Ezek. xxvii. 17. "Minnith" was in the Haurân.

[3] "Pannag" is thus variously understood.

[4] Riehm. This resin was used largely as a salve for wounds, while oil from the leaves, bark, and black berries of the tree, was a noted medicine for both external and internal use.

[5] Rom. xi. 17 (R.V.). Art. "Oelbaum," Herzog, 2te Auf., x. 725; Riehm, *Bibel Lex.*

nature, into a good olive-tree." He refers to the barrenness of the Jewish Church as the olive of God's own choice, and the grafting on it of the Gentiles, hitherto a wild olive, but, now, through this grafting, made to yield fruit, though only from the root and sap of the old noble stem. By the "olive-tree wild by nature" can only be meant the shoots that spring up wild and worthless from the root. There is no wild olive apart from these.

The tree has a long life. For ten years it bears no fruit, and it is not till its fortieth year that it reaches its highest productiveness. In spring the blossoms shoot out in clusters among the leaves, but the harvest does not come till October, when the dark-green, oval berries, somewhat larger than a cherry, are ready for gathering. This is done by women and boys, who climb into the trees and shake them, or stand beneath and beat the branches with a long pole, but there are always a few left in the topmost branches, and these are the perquisite of gleaners. It seems as if we still lived, in this respect, in the days of Moses and the prophets. "When thou beatest thine olive-tree," says Moses,[1] "thou shalt not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow." "Gleaning grapes shall be in it," says Isaiah,[2] "as the shaking of an olive-tree: two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outer—most fruitful—branches thereof." The poor olive-gleaner may still be seen every year gathering what he can after the trees have been stripped by their owners.

This harvest-time is one of general gladness, as may well be supposed. Some berries fall, by the wind or from other causes, before the general crop is ripe, but they must lie there, guarded by watchmen, till a proclamation is made by the governor that all the trees are to be picked.

[1] Deut. xxiv. 20. [2] Isa. xvii. 6; xxiv. 13.

This is to allow the tax-gatherer to be on the spot to demand his toll; for the Turk foolishly taxes each tree, thus discouraging as much as possible the increase of plantations. The gleanings left, after all efforts, are a boon to the very poor, who manage to gather enough to keep their lamp alight through the winter and to cook their simple fare.

The shoots springing up from the root of each tree long ago furnished a pleasant simile to the Psalmist. "Thy children," says he, "shall be like olive plants round thy table;"[1] that is, they will cluster round it as these suckers cling round the root from which they spring.

It is a striking illustration of the smallness of the population in Palestine that thousands of olive-trees are left uncared for, to be swallowed up by an undergrowth of thorns and weeds. The tax on each tree is, no doubt, in part the cause of this state of things. Fear of its being increased paralyses industry.

In ancient times the gathered olives were either pressed, or trodden by the feet, in an olive-vat.[2] The finest oil, however, was that which flowed from the berries when they were merely beaten, not from those that were pressed, and hence it was expressly required for religious services.[3] It is also the "fresh oil" of which David speaks.[4] An oil-vat at the foot of the Mount of Olives gave its name to the garden of Gethsemane. Remains of such vats, hewn in the rocks, are found in places where there is now no longer any trace of the olive—as, for instance, in the country south of Hebron; so that the tree formerly grew over a wider region than at present. Along with the vats in which the berries were trodden, presses and even mills were used after a time, the oil

[1] Ps. cxxviii. 3.
[2] Mic. vi. 15.
[3] Ex. xxvii. 20; xxix. 40; Lev. xxiv. 2.
[4] Ps. xcii. 10.

being so imperfectly separated by the feet that that custom is now quite discontinued.

Without cultivation the olive soon ceases to yield. Hence the soil underneath it is ploughed each spring, or oftener, so as to admit the air to the roots, and no crop is sown, as under other fruit-trees. The earth, moreover, is drawn round the tree to keep it moist; but neither manuring nor pruning is practised. A full crop is gathered only each second year, from what cause I do not know. One strange fact in connection with this was told me. We are accustomed to regard locusts as only a curse, but it is said that they often prove the reverse, since their greedy jaws virtually prune the trees, and thus double the harvest of the next year.

The mills used in obtaining the oil are of two kinds; the one, worked by hand, consisting simply of a heavy stone wheel, which is rolled over the berries thrown into a stone basin. When crushed, they are taken out as pulp, and put into straw baskets, which are then placed in a screw-press and squeezed. The oil thus obtained is of excellent quality, though inferior to the "beaten;" but a third quality is obtained by subjecting the already pressed pulp to a second squeezing. The other mill is a hollow cylinder, with iron rods projecting at its lower end. It stands upright, and turns on a round framework of stone, the iron rods beating the olives to pulp as they are thrown in. After this maceration they are put under a beam heavily weighted at the end, and thus, one would think, the last possible yield of oil is obtained. But there is still a little left, and a second pressing, after the already sorely squeezed pulp has been heated, secures this final portion.

Beyond Mejdel the country was beautiful. Olive-groves and softly-green fields of barley varied the light-brown of the ploughed land, or the roughness of tracts which

there was no one to till. Over these tracts, tufts of large lily-like plants grew in great abundance; great numbers of the bulbs, mostly squills, lying at the roadside, where the light ploughs had torn them out of the patches of soil taken for cultivation. Bands of white limestone cropped up here and there, as the road climbed the low swells; larks sang in the air, or perched on some clod, or ran ahead of us on the track, before taking wing—for there are fifteen species of lark in Palestine; a string of camels kept us in mind of the East, as they stalked on, laden with huge boxes of "hundel," a kind of root used for mysterious combinations by the drug merchants. A low cemented whitewashed structure, like a miniature saint's tomb, with an opening breast-high on one side, stood by the road—a drinking fountain, filled daily by the kindness of women passing with their water-jars, to supply the wayfarer with a cup of cold water, than which no gift is more precious in this dry and thirsty land. Kindness of heart, thank God, is limited to no race or country. The experience of Canon Tristram, in one instance, is that of every traveller in any hot climate. Thirsting exceedingly, he asked a drink from a young Arab girl who had her tall water-jar on her shoulder, having just filled it. In a moment it was set down for the freest use. A small present for her courtesy seemed natural, but she would not take it. Tears filled her eyes; she would have no bakshish; she gave the water freely, for the sake of her mother, lately dead, and for charity and the love of God! So saying, she kissed the hands of the party, and they passed on—anyone can imagine with what thoughts. So, doubtless, it sometimes happened with our blessed Lord and His band of disciples, as they journeyed over the hot, white hills of Galilee or Judæa; the giver who put her water-jar at their service for the love of the Master, in

nowise losing her reward.[1] Everywhere, the country outside the town gardens lay unfenced; here, in wild scanty pasture; at another part, broken up into patches of ploughed land, or green with spring crops. What seemed mole-hills were to be seen everywhere, but it appears that they were the mounds of a kind of mole-rat, not of the true mole, which is not found in Palestine; the mole-rat taking its place.[2] This is the creature called a weasel in the English Bible.[3] Unlike our mole, it delights in the ruins scattered so widely over the land; the cavities in them, doubtless, supplying ready-made spots for its nest. It is twice the size of our mole, with no external eyes, and with only faint traces, within, of the rudimentary organ; no apparent ears, but, like the mole, with great internal organs of hearing; a strong bare snout, and large gnawing teeth; its colour, a pale slate; its feet, short, and provided with strong nails; its tail, only rudimentary. Isaiah, in his prophecy of the idols being thrown to the moles and to the bats,[4] uses a different word, but its meaning, "thrower up of the soil," fixes its application. It is a curious illustration of the poverty of the Hebrew language, and the consequent difficulty of quite accurate translation, that a word rendered once in our version, "the mole,"[5] is rendered "swan" in the two other cases in which it is used,[6] the context forming the only clue to its meaning, which, in these two cases, seems to point to its being some bird. Nor do scholars help one very much, for they render it, variously, pelican, horned owl, water-hen, or sea-swallow.

Still other villages!—Nalia and Burberah, embowered in orchards and olive-grounds, which stretch unbroken for

[1] Matt. x. 42; Mark ix. 41.
[2] Tristram, *Land of Israel*, p. 186.
[3] Lev. xi. 29.
[4] Isa. ii. 20.
[5] Lev. xi. 30.
[6] Lev. xi. 18; Deut. xiv. 16.

four miles south of Mejdel; those of Nalia half-way across the sand-dunes, which must have been kept back from them by infinite labour. West of the Nalia orchards and groves these sand-dunes stretch little more than a mile inland; immediately south of the town they run three miles into the land; the gardens jutting out into them as a verdant peninsula. At Burberah, a mile to the south, they cover a breadth of three miles. On the east of the village, green barley-fields stretched away as far as the eye could reach, hemming round a sea of gardens hedged with the prickly pear, and beautiful with the grey and green of olive-trees, figs, pomegranates, and almonds; the last in all the glory of their white blossom. Vineyards, also fenced, varied the bounteous prospect, and olive-trees, in open groves, clothed the slopes, almost in thousands. Very different would be the landscape a few months later. The olive-groves would then be dull with dust, the mulberry-leaves gone—as food for sheep, no silkworms being cultivated in this part—the soil parched and dry, the very stubble withered to tinder; the sky brass, the earth iron; trees and villages seeming to quiver in the hot air.

Harvest is over on the plains before it begins in the mountains, so that the peasants of Philistia go off to gather the crops of the highlands after their own are secured. The sickle is still in use for reaping, as it was in Bible times; the reaper gathering the grain into his left arm as he cuts it.[1] Following him comes the binder, who makes up into large bundles—not as with us into sheaves—the little heaps of the reaper.[2] During his toil, the peasant refreshes himself with a poor meal of roasted wheat, and pieces of bread dipped in vinegar and water,[3]

[1] Ps. cxxix. 7; Isa. xvii. 5.
[2] Jer. ix. 22; Ps. cxxix. 7; Gen. xxxvii. 7.
[3] 1 Sam. xvii. 17; Ruth ii. 14.

just as they did of old. The bundles of cut grain are carried on asses or sometimes on camels[1] to the open-air threshing-floor, near the village; one of the huge bundles, nearly as large as the camel itself, being hung on each side of the patient beast, in a rough netting of rope, as he kneels to receive them. Rising and bearing them off, he once more kneels at the threshing-floor, to have them removed, returning forthwith to the reapers to repeat the same round. The harvest in Palestine lasts for weeks; one kind of grain ripening before another, and different levels having a different time for reaping. In the plain of Philistia it begins in April and ends in June, but on the deep-sunk and hot plains of the Jordan the barley harvest begins at the end of March, and that of wheat two or three weeks later. In the mountains it is later, as I have said, than on the sea-coast. Garden fruits and grapes ripen before the autumn, but maize, melons, olives, and dates not till autumn has commenced. It was the same in ancient times. The harvest began legally on the second day of the Passover week, the 16th of Nisan, the month when the grain came to the ear, which corresponded to our April. From that time harvest continued for seven weeks, till the feast of Pentecost.[2] Barley came first, then wheat,[3] which is all reaped in the Jordan valley, in ordinary years, by the middle of May.

The threshing-floor is always chosen on as exposed and high a spot as can be had, to catch the wind for winnowing; flat spaces on hill-tops being selected in some cases, as in that of Araunah the Jebusite.[4] The ground is

[1] Carts were also used anciently. (Amos ii. 13.)

[2] Ex. xxiii. 16; Lev. xxiii. 10; Deut. xvi. 9; Jos. *Ant.*, iii. 10, 5.

[3] Ruth i. 22; ii. 23; 2 Sam. xxi. 9; Gen. xx x. 14; Judg. xv. 1; 1 Sam vi. 13; xii. 17.

[4] 2 Sam. xxiv. 18.

prepared by being beaten and trampled smooth and hard. Heaps of grain laid in circles, with the heads inwards, are piled on the threshing-floor, which is guarded during the night by a watchman in a slight watch-hut on the floor, if, as in the instance of Boaz, the owner himself does not sleep on the sheaves.[1] Like Ruth, the poor gleaner is content to beat out her few armfuls with a stick.[2] But though need of secrecy forced Gideon to use the flail in the hollow of the wine-press,[3] it is no longer in general use in Palestine; only legumes like fitches, or herbs like cummin, being now beaten, as indeed was the general case in the days of Isaiah.[4]

Where there are no threshing-sledges, oxen are still employed to tread out the grain, over which they walk, round and round, as it lies in huge mounds on the floor, just as I have seen horses driven round on it in Southern Russia. The kindly requirement of the old Mosaic law, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn,"[5] has happily outlived the changes of race in the land, and is still nearly always observed, though here and there a peasant is found who ties up the mouth of the poor creatures that tread out his grain. Usually, however, threshing-sledges are employed to separate the corn from the straw. The commonest of these is a solid wooden sledge, consisting only of a set of thick boards, bolted together by cross-bands, and bent up at the front, to let it pass easily over the straw. In the bottom of the planks are fixed numerous rows of sharp stones, to facilitate the threshing, and also to cut up the straw into the "teben" used for fodder. Oxen yoked to this are driven round over the heaps of grain and straw; a man, with a large wooden fork, turning over the heap as the

[1] Ruth iii. 7. [2] Ruth ii. 17. [3] Judg. vi. 11.
[4] Isa. xxviii. 27. [5] Deut. xxv. 4.

sledge passes, till the grain is entirely separated and the straw sufficiently broken into small pieces. The "teben," with which a great deal of grain is necessarily mixed, is then thrown into the centre of the floor, where it gradually rises to a huge mound. The chaff and the grain are next swept into a separate heap, to be winnowed when all the harvest is threshed. To make the sledge heavier, the driver usually stands on it, or, as the time is one of general enjoyment, one may see it covered with laughing children, enjoying the slow ride round and round. It was such "threshing instruments" that Araunah presented to David, along with the oxen and the implements of the threshing-floor, that he might have at once a sacrifice and the wood to consume it.[1] The word in Hebrew is "morag," and it is still retained in the form of "mowrej," or, in some parts of the country, "norag," so that there is no doubt as to the "instrument" Araunah was using. When Isaiah paints Israel on its return from captivity as "a new sharp morag having teeth," he refers to the same threshing-sledge as is used to-day, and it is to this that Job compares Leviathan when he says that "his underparts are like sharp potsherds; he spreadeth, as it were, a threshing-wain upon the mire."[2] A more complicated form of threshing-machine, known as a threshing-waggon, is used in some places, consisting of a frame like that of a harrow, with three revolving axles set in it like so many wheels, provided with projecting iron teeth; a chair being fixed over them for the driver, who is protected by their being covered with a wooden case on the side next him. Such a wheeled threshing-sledge was already in use in the days of Isaiah, and even

[1] 2 Sam. xxiv. 22.

[2] Job xli. 30 (R.V.). The three texts quoted are the only ones in which "morag" occurs in the Old Testament.

drawn by horses, for the prophet tells us that "fitches are not threshed with a sharp morag; neither is the wheel of a threshing-waggon rolled over the cummin. Bread-corn is threshed out, but yet one does not keep on threshing it for ever, nor does he crush it [the kernel] small with the wheel of his threshing-waggon or with his horses" [which drag the waggon].[1] In Proverbs we are further told that "a wise king winnoweth away the wicked, and bringeth the threshing-wheel over him," an allusion to the dreadful custom of condemning prisoners of war, when especially hated, to be cut into small pieces by driving over them a threshing-waggon, or threshing-sledge, with its rows of iron spikes or sharp stones, till their flesh was torn off in morsels. This was apparently the hideous fate assigned by David to some of the Ammonite prisoners taken after the capture of Rabbah,[2] and, indeed, seems to have been usual in war in those ages, for the Syrians boasted that they had destroyed Israel till they were like the dust caused by threshing—into pieces so small had they cut the prisoners who suffered their fury. Syria indeed appears to have been specially given to this dreadful savagery, for Amos tells us that Damascus—that is, the King of Syria—would suffer the fierce vengeance of Jehovah for having "threshed the people of Gilead with the sharp iron teeth of threshing-waggons."[3] Thank God, infamous though war is still, it does not stoop to this!

To winnow the grain is severe work, and, as such, is left to the men. It is mostly done, just as in the days of Ruth, in the evening and during the night, when the night-wind is blowing.[4] The cool breeze which in the summer months comes from the sea in a gentle air in the

[1] Isa. xxviii. 27.
[2] 2 Sam. xii. 31.
[3] Amos i. 3.
[4] Ruth iii. 2.

morning, grows stronger towards sunset, and blows till about ten o'clock, causing the "cool of the day," or, as it is in the Hebrew, "the wind of the day," in which Jehovah walked in Eden;[1] the time till which the Beloved was to feed his flocks among the lilies, when the darkness would leave him free to seek her whom his soul loved, in the pleasant hours when the air was cooled by the night wind.[2] Too strong a wind, however, is avoided, as Jeremiah shows was the custom in his day—"A dry [hot] wind [will blow] from the bare places of the wilderness . . . not to fan nor to cleanse, but a stronger wind."[3] "Winnow not with every wind," had, indeed, become a proverb as long ago as the days of the Son of Sirach.[4] The chaff, grain, and "teben," which have gradually been gathered into a great central mound, are thrown up against the wind with a wooden fork, sometimes of two prongs, but more commonly with five or six; the broken straw being carefully preserved to throw into the centre, while the chaff is allowed to blow away. A sieve is also used now, generally by women: a light, half-oval wooden frame, about a yard across, with a coarse hair or palm-fibre bottom; the winnower holding it by the round side and tossing up the grain from it against the wind.[5] Two winnowings are necessary: the first to separate the "teben" and the chaff; the second to sift out the unthreshed ears and pieces of earth mixed with the grain. The fork, or shovel—for sometimes a wooden shovel is used, like half of a small barrel-lid, the round side towards the handle—finally separates the grain completely, so that it is ready to be put into the garner. Images taken from the threshing-

[1] Gen. iii. 8.

[2] Cant. ii. 17. This is the true reading of the words, "Till the day dawn."

[3] Jer. iv. 11. [4] Ecclus. v. 9. [5] Amos ix. 9.

floor are frequent in Scripture. "The wicked," says Job, "are as teben before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away,"[1] and this terrible figure is often repeated. As in our Lord's day, the chaff and broken straw unavoidably left on the ground, after every care in winnowing and gathering, are burnt, at once to get rid of them and to fertilise the soil by the ashes, a practice that throws a terrible light on the Baptist's words:[2] "Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly cleanse His threshing-floor, and He will gather the wheat into the garner, but the chaff He will burn up with an unquenchable fire." Sometimes, indeed, the stubble in the fields is burnt, for the same reasons, as Isaiah must have seen before he wrote the verse, "As the tongue of fire devoureth the stubble, and as the dry grass sinketh down in the flame, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust."[3]

Another passage in the same prophet, alluding in part to the threshing-floor, has often been misunderstood, and, indeed, is mistranslated in the Revised Version[4]—"Moab shall be trodden down under Him [Jehovah], even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill." The Revised Version reads: "even as straw is trodden down in the water of the dunghill"—that is, in the pool of liquid manure connected with a dunghill in our ideas. But there is no such thing in Palestine as a dunghill, and there is no reason to think there ever was. Gardens are manured chiefly with goats' dung; and in some parts the dung of pigeons, obtained from dove-cots and pigeon-towers in the neighbourhood, is used for cucumbers and melons. No manure requiring to be carried is ever used in the grain-fields or pastures. Even the abundant

[1] Job xxi. 18; Isa. xli. 15, 16; Ps. i. 4; xxxv. 5.
[2] Matt. iii. 12 (R.V.); Luke iii. 17.
[3] Isa. v. 24 (R.V.).
[4] Isa. xxv. 10.

manure accumulated in the cattle-sheds during winter is left undisturbed till the rains wash it away, unless there be gardens at hand. The Hebrew word "Madmenah," translated "dunghill," is the name of a town in Moab, famous, no doubt, for its threshing-floors, but also for the huge mound of all uncleanness—the town dust-heap[1]—found in every Eastern town; "Madmenah" being the word for this Oriental characteristic. Jeremiah uses it in its short form, "Madmen," for the Moabitish town, but there was also a Benjamite place of the same name[2] a little way north of Jerusalem. Isaiah's meaning, therefore, is that Moab will be trodden down by Jehovah as the "teben" is trodden to fragments on the threshing-floors of Madmenah.[3]

The words that follow: "And He [Jehovah] shall spread forth His hands in the midst thereof, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim," need, for their right understanding, that one should have seen Orientals swimming. They never "spread forth" their hands as with us, but strike the water with one hand after the other, from above, beating it down, as it were, and passing triumphantly over it. So would Jehovah do with Moab—He would "lay low his pride."[4]

When the grain is finally winnowed, sifted, and thrown up into a great heap, the owner often takes up his quarters on it for the night, just as Boaz did long ago,[5] to watch it till, on the morrow, he can get it carried to his underground cistern or storehouse, in bags on his beasts, for there are no wheeled vehicles now in Palestine, though there

[1] Jer. xlviii. 2.

[2] Isa. x. 31.

[3] A various reading of the Hebrew would make the sense of the passage "by the waters" of Madmenah. "Madmen" occurs in Jer. xlviii. 2; "Madmenah," Isa. x. 31; "Madmănnah," Josh. xv. 31; 1 Chron. ii. 49.

[4] Isa. xxv. 10.

[5] Ruth iii. 7.

were in antiquity.[1] It is a curious sight to watch the poor donkeys, with their loads of grain, marching along so meekly, or the gaunt camels swaying forwards under their huge bags or baskets. The country is full of underground cisterns, formerly used to store grain; their mouths being carefully hidden with a layer of soil to prevent discovery by a robber or an enemy. It was of such granaries that the men of Shiloh spoke in pleading for their lives with the murderous Ishmael: "Slay us not, for we have treasures in the field, of wheat, and of barley, and of oil, and of honey."[2] Such subterranean storehouses are still very numerous in some parts. Tristram found nearly fifty of them, each about six feet deep, in one village on the Dead Sea, from which a foray of Arabs had plundered the millet, wheat, barley, and indigo previously hidden away in them.[3]

The yield of grain in ancient times in Palestine must have been large, since we find a surplus not needed by the home population exported to Phœnicia; Middle and North Palestine and the districts east of the Jordan especially maintaining this outward trade.[4] The usual return seems to have been about thirty-fold, although sometimes it reached a hundred.[5] At the present day, however, wheat yields only twelve to sixteen-fold, though barley often yields fifty, and dhourra gives a return, not seldom, of from a hundred-and-fifty to two-hundred-fold.

[1] 1 Sam. vi. 7; 2 Sam. vi. 3; 1 Chron. xiii. 7; Amos ii. 13. In the Pentateuch the same word is used nine times, and is always translated "waggons"; referring to those brought from Egypt, or used there.

[2] Jer. xli. 8.

[3] *Land of Israel*, p. 337.

[4] 1 Kings v. 9, 11; Ezek. xxvii. 17; Ezra iii. 7; Acts xii. 20.

[5] Gen. xxvi. 12; Matt. xiii. 8.

CHAPTER VIII.

GAZA.

Outside Burberah is a large pond at the roadside, to collect the rain-water for use in summer; the latter and early rains, in the close and opening of the year, filling it. The water was the colour of mud, but it seemed to give delight alike to man and beast. Women with their jars on their shoulders were bringing a supply from it for household use, cattle were drinking it, and dirty children were swimming in it, making the water splash up before them as they beat it with each hand alternately.[1] Some of the women had children on their shoulder, and I could not but notice how firmly the little creatures kept their seat. As soon as they are out of their mummy-like swaddling-clothes,[2] which are strips of calico about six inches wide and three yards long, they are taught to perch on their mother's shoulder, holding on to her head, while she supports their back with one hand. Very soon, however, this is unnecessary; the child learning to clasp its mother's shoulder with its knees, so as to need no other help. Mother and child have thus both hands free, while in the one case the mother is made to carry herself erect, which of itself is a great benefit, and in the other the child is trained to be a splendid rider; for the same grip with

[1] See *ante*, p. 152.

[2] Luke ii. 7, 12; Ezek. xvi. 4; Job xxxviii. 9. Babies are rubbed with salt before they are put in their swaddling-clothes.

the knees which keeps it safe on the shoulder makes it afterwards perfectly at home in the saddle. An Oriental will carry a coin all day between his knee and the saddle, while riding, often at full speed, over very rough ground, and show it in the same place in the evening; so perfect is his seat. Boys are more often honoured by a place on their mother's shoulder than girls, for there is pride in a man-child, but a daughter counts for very little. It is therefore a mark of a better state of things when Isaiah says of the long procession of the returning exiles from Babylon: "Thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders."[1] The mud huts and walls of the little courts were stuck over with cakes of cattle-dung, drying for fuel.

Outside the village groves there are no trees, and between the villages there is no population. The absence of travel on the road was remarkable, but at last a camel from Gaza passed us, laden with crockery in huge nets on each side of it. Another soon followed, with large bales of something unknown. Then, at intervals, came two companies of men driving horses from Damascus to Egypt for sale, or for the use of pilgrims to Meccah; thus reversing the order of trade in antiquity, for of old Egypt supplied Syria with horses.[2] The sand-hills on the right now came almost up to the road, for a time, but they receded ere long, giving way to arable ground, on which the wheat stood three or four inches high. Flocks of sheep, some of them with black faces; mud cottages, with slightly-rounded mud roofs covered with grass, soon to wither under the growing heat;[3] herds of cattle, asses, and camels, peaceably feeding on the hill-slopes, marked the neighbourhood of Deir Sineid, round

[1] Isa. xlix. 22.

[2] 1 Kings x. 28; 2 Chron. i. 16; ix. 28.

[3] Ps. cxxix. 6.

which peasants in cotton tunics and turbans, with the long sharp-pointed goad in their hand, slowly followed the yoked oxen, small and thin, which dragged their light ploughs. One could not help thinking of the words of the wise Son of Sirach as these poor men stalked patiently along their furrows of a few inches deep —sunk in poverty, and forced to toil from sunrise to sunset, mainly to pay their taxes: "How can he get wisdom that holdeth the plough and that glorieth in the goad, that driveth oxen, and is occupied in their labours, and whose talk is of bullocks; he giveth his mind to make furrows, and is diligent to give the kine fodder."[1]

Deir Sineid, like all the villages of the plain, consists of mere mud hovels. At the entrance to it rose a great dust-heap, as in all Eastern villages and towns; the counterpart of that, doubtless, to which poor Job betook himself in his affliction.[2] The "ashes" "among" which he sat down were the "mezbele," or dust-mound, of a Palestine village, which is very different from the farm "dunghill" of our rural neighbourhoods. Manure in the East is not mixed with straw as with us, no litter being used for cattle in so dry and warm a climate, and it is almost entirely that of the ass, for few horses are kept, and cattle, sheep, and goats are generally out of doors, day and night. The ordure is brought from time to time, dry, with every other form of refuse, in baskets, to the assigned place beside the village, and usually burnt every month; care being taken to select a day on which the smoke is driven away from human dwellings. But as the ashes are left untouched, the "mezbele" in an old village often rises high above the houses; the rains having consolidated it into a hill, which is excavated into grain-

[1] Ecclus. xxxviii. 25, 26. [2] Job ii. 8.

pits, where corn can be stored through the year, safe from fermentation or vermin. It also serves the villagers as a look-out, and is the favourite lounging-place in the cool of the evening, to enjoy the air which blows at this comparative elevation. Through the day it is the playground of the children; the sufferer from any loathsome disease, such as the leprosy of Job, shut out from human dwellings, makes his bed on it; and the wandering beggar, after sitting on it by day craving alms, burrows during the night in its ashes, which the sun has heated. The village dogs sun themselves on it, or gnaw at some carcass thrown out on this common receptacle of all vileness, for no one thinks of burying a dead animal; it is either left where it falls or dragged to the "mezbele." Many places in the Haurân take their names from the size and number of these hills, just as Madmenah, as we have already seen, did in former ages, and many a modern village is built on a "mezbele" from its healthiness, being elevated as it is above the undrained ground below, and with the view of getting the cool air on its summit.[1]

Passing through these villages in the evening, when the cattle are returning from the field, it is striking to notice how often the poor creatures go directly to their own feeding-place, generally in the yard of their owner's house. They will make their way through the villagers sitting around, perhaps at their evening meal, and open the doors into their own quarters with their horns, without anyone aiding them. Isaiah must have noticed this when he wrote, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."[2]

The last village before entering Gaza is called Beit

[1] See Consul-General, Dr. Wetstein, in Delitzsch's *Iob*, p. 62.

[2] Isa. i. 3.

Hanun—"the House of Grace": a sad misnomer, since its population have the worst name as rogues and thieves. It stands on a hill, with a fair proportion of gardens and barley-patches round it, and, of course, a rain-pond, with its crowd of urchins enjoying themselves in the water. Many cattle and calves were feeding on the slopes. Country people, both men and women, passed by us on their way to the village or to Gaza, many of the women carrying on their heads baskets of eggs, cheese, or, rather, the curd which passes for cheese in Palestine, and vegetables, or great jars of sour goats' milk. I noticed also a mother on an ass, her child in her lap, her husband walking behind: a picture, perhaps, of Mary and her infant Son, with Joseph, as they journeyed from Bethlehem to Egypt, it may be by this very route. A soldier on a swift horse galloped by, and many a thin, scorched peasant wended homewards on a lowly ass, his naked feet almost touching the ground at its sides.

Gaza is embowered in great olive-woods which stretch north-eastwards the whole four miles to Beit Hanun. The sand-dunes directly north of the town, and to the west, are broken by a wide oasis of olive-groves and gardens, which girdle Gaza on nearly all sides, in a wide sweep. The town itself lies on a hill, 100 feet above the plain, and 180 feet above the sea, with some palm-trees rising beneath, amidst, and above it; five minarets breaking the outline of the flat roofs and mud walls which cluster over each other up the slope. A cemented, low-domed fountain of mud bricks stood on the road outside, then came the great rain-pond of the town, which had leaked across the road, making it, for a space, into a quagmire. Six men sat cross-legged on the ground at the roadside, doing nothing; and, beyond them, mud walls, topped by the hideous prickly pear, stretched up

the hill, enclosing sadly wild-looking orchards of palms, figs, and other fruit-trees.

No one who has not seen an Oriental town can imagine its filthiness. The mud houses crumble into dust at a given rate daily, and all the garbage, offal, and foulness of daily life are thrown into the narrow lane, when the dust-hill is too far off. Rivulets of abomination soak out from a hole made for their escape at the side of each door. Nor is this the only kind of filth. There are no scavengers, and there is no decency.[1]

I went several times through the chief streets of the town, which were wretched in the extreme, according to Western notions, yet the bazaar was well supplied with some kinds of goods, especially with the different articles of food. Masses of dried figs, dates, heaps of beans, lentils, dried corn and flour, piles of bread, cheese, and vegetables, and much else, were exposed for sale. The market of Jerusalem and other Hebrew towns must have been much the same in the time of David.[2] An extensive trade is driven in supplying the caravans which cross the desert with provisions, and in providing for those returning from it the long-missed enjoyment of fresh food of every kind. The different trades are found, as once was the case in England, in separate streets, so that there is a distinct quarter for each. In one street tailors sit in open booths on both sides of the way, plying their useful art; in another, cobblers make light slippers of red and yellow leather, or patch up old ones which in England would be thrown out as hopelessly beyond repair. The smiths,

[1] It is to the odious custom of Orientals that Scripture often alludes when it speaks of "dung on the face of the earth"; *e.g.*, Ps. lxxxiii. 10; Jer. viii. 2. To remove the evils resulting was the object of the Law of Moses, given in Deut. xxiii. 13.

[2] 1 Sam. xxx. 11 ff; 2 Sam. xvii. 28.

also, have their own street, where they carry on their rude industry with small goat-skin bellows and miniature forges, sitting on the floor to beat the metal on small anvils. As I looked at them I could not help thinking of the day when working in iron was prohibited to the Hebrews, as it was in after-days forbidden to the Romans by Porsena, and the peasants had to come down from their hills to this very town and other Philistine cities of the sea-coast plain for work of this kind, because "there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel; for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears; but all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his [plough-] share, and his spade, and his hoe, and his bill, when the ploughshares, spades, hoes, forks, or bills, or ox-goads had worn blunt."[1] One could not forget, moreover, that in ancient Jerusalem the different trades were confined to separate streets; for we read of the "Bakers' street,"[2] the "Goldsmiths' street," and the "Oilsellers' street," besides which the Talmud speaks of other quarters for different trades.

Everywhere cocks and hens wandered at their will; eggs being now, as they have been for many ages, a principal article of diet, and fowls the staple form of animal food. Already, in Christ's day, these birds were numerous in Jerusalem and Palestine generally,[3] but they were then a comparatively recent innovation. Birds, indeed, were fattened for the table among the ancient Hebrews,[4] for Nehemiah says: "Fowls were prepared for me;" and "fatted fowl" were part of Solomon's "pro-

[1] 1 Sam. xiii. 19—21, emended translation, Thenius, De Wette.
[2] Jer. xxxvii. 21; Neh. iii. 32; Matt. xxv. 9.
[3] 2 Esdras i. 30; Matt. xxiii. 37; xxvi. 34, &c. See Reference Bible.
[4] Neh. v. 18; 1 Kings iv. 23.

vision," but there is no proof that they were ordinary poultry, Solomon's fowl being apparently geese, ducks, or swans. Doves are the only birds which we know, certainly, to have been bred by the Hebrews for the table.[1] Neither the cock nor the hen is mentioned in the Old Testament, nor are eggs enumerated among the articles of Hebrew food; passages in which they are alluded to, referring to those of wild birds.[2] Nor is it strange that this should be so, for the ancient Egyptians, from whom the Hebrews came out, had no barn-door fowls, the hen never appearing on their monuments, though geese and ducks are constantly introduced. Indeed, the hen was unknown even in Greece till the second half of the sixth century before Christ; Homer and Hesiod never alluding to it. Originally an Indian bird, it was early known to the Babylonians, for we find it on very ancient gems and cylinders as a symbol of some deity. It appeared in Palestine for the first time after the rise of the Persian Empire, as it did also among the Greeks, who long knew it as the "Persian bird." Hence we find it noticed in the New Testament. The Book of Esdras, also, which was written in the reign of Domitian,[3] in its striking copy of our Lord's beautiful figure, put in the mouth of the "Almighty Lord," introduces it: "I gathered you together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings."

On the hill, almost in the centre of Gaza, stands the chief mosque, originally a Christian church of the twelfth century. No difficulty was made as to my entering—though, in accordance with the primæval custom of the

[1] Gen. xv. 9; 2 Kings vi. 25.

[2] Deut. xxii. 6; Isa. x. 14.

[3] See reference above. Also Reuss, *Gesch. des A. T.*, § 597. Domitian reigned A.D. 81—96. Böttcher is clearly wrong (*Aehrenlese*, 1397) in ascribing the absence of hens among the Hebrews to their being hated as an Egyptian bird. They were not Egyptian.

East, it was necessary to take off my boots and replace them with slippers before stepping upon holy ground. This rule has even extended to private houses, the sitting-room of which, being at times used for prayer, must not be trodden except with bare or slippered feet. So it was with Moses at the burning bush,[1] and with Joshua before the captain of the Lord's host,[2] and with Isaiah when, in his great vision, he saw the Lord high and lifted up.[3] The dust of common ground must not touch the holy spot.

The mosque has three aisles, which formed part of the ancient church; rows of pillars, with Corinthian capitals, dividing them one from the other. On the south side and east end additions have been made by the Arabs. Of the three, the middle aisle is the highest, the roof being here supported by two rows of pillars, one above the other, each pillar of the lower row having a cluster of small marble pillars round it, for greater strength. The church is built in the old basilica form, but the roof-arches of the side aisles are in the Arab style. A small choir at the south end of the building rests on a number of small pillars without capitals. The west doorway is a beautiful specimen of the Italian Gothic of the twelfth-century churches in Palestine, with delicate clustered shafts and pillars, deeply undercut lily-leaves adorning the capitals. The roof, of groined vaulting, is entire; and on one of the pillars of the upper row is a touching design of the seven-branched candlestick, inside a wreath. Pity that its light should be extinguished by the superstition of Mahomet, but it has been so since about A.D. 1350, as recorded in an inscription on one of the walls. It had shone, however, for many generations since the first church of which we know at Gaza was built, about A.D. 402.[4] In Christ's

[1] Ex. iii. 5. [2] Josh. v. 15. [3] Isa. xx. 2.
[4] *Pal. Fund Memoirs*, iii. 251.

day there were ten heathen temples in Gaza—to the Sun, Venus, Apollo, Proserpina, Hecate, Fortune, "The Hiereion," and Marnas,[1] the greatest of the gods of Gaza, whose sanctuary, which was round, was believed by the townsmen to be more glorious than any other in the world. All these shrines, however, were pulled down by a decree obtained by the wife of the Emperor Arcadius from her husband, commanding them to be removed, and a church—which was dedicated at Easter, A.D. 406—was built on the site of the temple of the god Marnas. Very curiously, in 1880 a statue of this famous deity, fifteen feet high, was discovered by some peasants in a large natural mound about six miles south of Gaza. It is a human figure in a sitting position, with an arrangement of the hair like that of the classic Jupiter. The peasants had commenced to destroy it as soon as it was found, but it was rescued from them by the English missionary at Gaza, though not before the face had been much injured. Marnas was the great Jupiter, the god of rain and fruitfulness, and was honoured, besides, as "the living, the eternal, the universal, and the everlasting." One arm and both legs appear to have been sawn off, as if some pious heathen had cut the idol in pieces to facilitate his saving it from the fury of the Christians. The statue is now at Constantinople. A register 1,000 years old is said to be preserved in the present church, built in the place of that which stood on the site of the temple of Marnas.

Remains of antiquity are found here and there in the city. A shoemaker in one street, or rather, narrow alley—for there are no streets in our sense—was beating leather on an upturned marble Corinthian capital. The second

[1] There were six temples to heathen gods, and four to goddesses (Schürer, *N. T. Zeitgesch.*, p. 379).

mosque is built largely of ancient cut stones. Marble pillars lie as doorsteps at the wretched Government offices, and sculptured capitals serve the same use before many private dwellings. Towards the sea are some pieces of granite columns, one of the fragments being fourteen feet long. On the east and south, beyond the houses, are mounds which probably show the position of the ancient, or perhaps the Crusading walls.

The strength of the Philistine city must have lain rather in the arms of its defenders than in its position, but such protection as walls and gates afforded has long since gone. Yet the streets, being very narrow, could be easily barred by chains, as, indeed, some of them, on occasion, are. The heat is much greater than at Jerusalem, but, contrary to the practice there, the streets are never arched over, the only protection being plaited mats, laid out roughly on poles, and extending from the houses and shops. These shops are unspeakably poor; in not a few cases mere holes, open in front, with more dirt than goods. A traditional site of the "House" of Dagon, which Samson pulled down,[1] is, of course, shown. This famous building stood, apparently, at the farther end of an open square, bordered inside by colonnades; the flat roof of the temple—for roofs are nearly all flat in the East—projecting beyond the sanctuary itself, to give shade beneath, while also affording a point of vantage from which to look down on the court below. This great verandah roof rested in its centre, it would appear, on no more than two great pillars, and was crowded by the great ones of Gaza when Samson was brought out to make sport for them in the wide quadrangle below. Some of the large mansions in Barbary, indeed, seem to be built in much the same way; a central structure,

[1] Judg. xvi. 27—30.

of great size, with colonnades and chambers on each side, enclosing an open space, which forms a large hollow square. The palace of the Dey of Algiers, in olden times, was of this kind, and its flat roof was often crowded by favoured spectators, assembled to divert themselves by exhibitions in the vacant area. The great platform thus utilised as a "stand" projected a long way in front of the building, and was supported in the middle by two pillars standing near each other. These pulled down, the whole structure above would fall, and it may well be that the "House" of Dagon was somewhat similar.[1]

The Turkish governor of the town happening to be holding his local court while I was at Gaza, I visited it. Ten red-leather chairs stood at one end of an otherwise unfurnished room, with a stone floor in very bad condition; the walls were yellow-washed. There was a small table at one corner, and beside this, on a line with the chairs, sat the governor, in a chair with arms; his cigarette-box on the table, and a nargileh, or water-pipe, at his feet; his dress European, except his fez; his complexion a light brown; his features regular, though the nose had decidedly the command-in-chief, especially in comparison with his somewhat small eyes. An officer in gold epaulets and blue dress sat near; two soldiers in very ancient uniform stood at the door. From time to time local dignitaries entered and took possession of a chair, on what we should call the bench; one, in a black abba of fine cloth, with a striped silk dress below it, a red shawl round his waist, a showy turban, and bright red slippers, being the most noteworthy. A dozen Arabs, in turbans and sheepskin coats, the wool inside, were standing before the kadi, each speaking at the top of his voice, and all at once. A few feet square of a public

[1] Shaw, *Barbary*, i. 392.

market, when rival salesmen are trying their lungs against each other, might help one to reproduce the scene. After a time the kadi interrupted the hubbub, which subsided into a dead calm as he motioned to speak. His judgment was given in a few words, and as there was no appeal, all went out as quietly as so many children from the dreaded presence of a schoolmaster. Presently a fine old man, the sheikh of the Terabin Arabs, stepped across to one of the chairs, and, sitting down, addressed the bench. A murder had been committed, some time before, in Gaza. Two Arabs, between whom there was a blood-feud, had accidentally met in the house of the English missionary; the second comer of the two turning away instantly, with a scowl, when he saw his intended victim. A few hours later, this unfortunate, while sitting in the town market-place, was shot dead by his enemy, in open day; the murderer fleeing to his tribe in the desert. The slain man had belonged to the tribe of which the present speaker was sheikh, and the governor had ordered him to arrest the man-slayer. But this was no easy matter. War had broken out between the tribes immediately after the murder, and had only been quelled by sending 400 soldiers from Jerusalem, but these were now withdrawn, leaving the author of all the trouble at large. "If you send troops, we shall try to arrest him," said the sheikh, "but if you do not, we shall not obey. There has been fighting already, as you know, and there would be more." Having spoken thus, he rose, and left the court-house, without waiting for a reply.

Blood-revenge has been a passion among all Semitic people from the earliest ages. It may have arisen, in some degree, as lynch law has sprung up in the frontier states of America, from the imperfect development of society, and the fancied necessity of taking private means to secure

justice; but whatever its source, it was early recognised as not only a right but a duty. Among the Bedouins it has, for ages, been made not only a personal matter, but the affair of the whole tribe of a murdered man, on each member of which lies the responsibility of obtaining vengeance. It considers not only the murderer or his next of blood, but every member of his family, or even of his tribe, as legitimate objects of revenge, and thus bloody and long-continued feuds on a large scale often arise. The murder of Abner by Joab, "for the blood of Asahel, his brother,"[1] which nearly led to a war, and the fear of the woman of Tekoah that the avengers of blood would not be content without life for life,[2] shows how deeply and dangerously the custom had rooted itself among the Hebrews. The law was, indeed, written, "He that killeth any man shall surely be put to death";[3] but the avenger of blood was left to be the executioner, due reprisals being regarded as so completely a fulfilment of the Divine will that God Himself is spoken of as the blood-avenger of His people.[4] No money payment could be taken for murder, or even for homicide: to compound such a felony made the land unclean before God.[5]. Innocent blood, in the opinion of the Hebrews, as of the Arabs now, cries from the ground to God for revenge.[6] Even the altar, inviolable for any other crime, could give the murderer no protection.[7]

It was manifestly wrong, however, to put deliberate and accidental homicide on the same footing, and hence means of escape were provided for those guilty of only the unintentional offence. Six free towns were provided

[1] 2 Sam. iii. 27. [2] 2 Sam. xiv. 11. [3] Lev. xxiv. 17.
[4] Ps. ix. 12. See Gen. ix. 5; xlii. 22; Ezek. xxxiii. 6.
[5] Num. xxxv. 33.
[6] Gen. iv. 10; Isa. xxvi. 21; Ezek. xxiv. 7; Job xvi. 18.
[7] Ex. xxi. 14; 1 Kings ii. 28.

to which the man-slayer might flee and find a sanctuary, if he proved before the elders his innocence of guilty purpose; the death of the high priest, finally, giving him leave to return home without danger. But even in the case of designed murder, the Law of Moses humanely limited revenge to the actual person of the murderer,[1] forbidding the fierce abuses prevalent among races like the Arabs. It was enacted, moreover, that the murderer should be publicly tried, and that the testimony of at least two witnesses should be necessary to his condemnation;[2] so that the blood-revenge sanctioned by the Bible only amounted to an obligation on the family of the murdered person to prosecute the murderer.

The public offices in Gaza are built of stone, but are old, and in very poor condition. A detached small stone building in the yard, with little windows closely barred, and, of course, with no glass, and two dark and terrible stone arches in the passage to the street, was the gaol—a fearful place in such a climate for prisoners heavily ironed. A huge convent, formerly connected with the great church, which is now used as a mosque, serves as a khan or caravanserai; its open court offering room for the beasts; the lower chambers, along the sides of the open space, serving as store-rooms for the loads of the asses or camels; and its upper rooms, quite empty, supplying shelter for the traders, merchants, or wayfarers who may need it. A man in charge of the whole receives a slight gratuity from everyone for his trouble, but there is no provision for either man or beast beyond a well in the centre of the court. It was to such an "inn" that the good Samaritan carried the man who had fallen among thieves; the two pence he gave the host to buy food for the unfortunate

[1] Deut. xxiv. 16; 2 Kings xiv. 6.
[2] Num. xxxv. 12, 30; Deut. xix. 12.

creature being the amount fixed by the Emperor Augustus as the monthly allowance to be paid to each poor citizen of Rome for flour. Such also was the "habitation" of Chimham,[1] by Bethlehem, where Jeremiah rested before being taken away to Egypt. The word translated "inn" in St. Luke, as the place in which the mother of our Lord could not find shelter, was not, however, as I have explained elsewhere,[2] a khan, but a private dwelling, so full of guests at the time that hospitality could not be shown to Mary and her husband.

On the east of the town a marble pillar, lying half buried, across the road, is shown as the traditional site of the city gate carried off by Samson, and near it is a small modern domed tomb, which is said to be his last resting-place, but in both cases faith or disbelief must remain free to everyone.

The luxuriance of the gardens and orchards of Gaza is due to the abundance of water, drawn from a great many wells, some of them not less than 150 feet deep. Good water is, indeed, plentiful at greater or less depth over all the district, even on the sea-shore, though the frequency of rubble cisterns to the south and east shows that in ancient times the inhabitants depended largely on artificial supply. The chief manufacture of Gaza is soap, which is carried over the desert to Cairo on the south, and to Joppa on the north. Black pottery is also made, and a good deal of coarse material for abbas is woven. It is curious to see the weavers in their small, windowless workshops — the only light coming from the open front—plying the shuttle in a loom as primitive as it could well have been 3,000 years ago, when the weaver's beam was made the comparison for the

[1] Jer. xli. 17.
[2] Geikie, *Life and Words of Christ*, i. 113.

ponderous shaft of Goliath's lance.[1] It is interesting to try to realise, from the sights of a town like Gaza, the everyday life of ancient Israel. The Hebrews had trades of many kinds among them, perhaps rudely enough carried out in many cases. In Jerusalem, and other towns of Bible times, one might have seen men at work, just as now in Gaza, or Joppa, or Damascus—making or sharpening ploughshares and all agricultural implements; armourers fashioning swords and spear-heads;[2] coppersmiths beating out water-jugs, trays, and basins;[3] and brassfounders skilful in all kinds of artistic work.[4] Goldsmiths and silversmiths plied their delicate arts, doubtless in open booths, as in Damascus at present,[5] making, as ordered, either an idol, or teraphim, in dark times, or a signet ring like that of Judah, which he gave in pledge to Tamar,[6] or purifying metal from alloy.[7] You could have bought a bright metal mirror, or a brass pot, or a censer,[8] or gold earrings or bracelets,[9] or a lordly dish of copper, like that of Jael.[10] If you had had precious stones, or corals, or pearls, you could have got them mounted in what settings and chasings you liked.[11] The ruby, the topaz, the sapphire, and other stones of price were to be had from the merchant. They could solder or polish, tinker, overlay with gold, silver, or copper.[12] In the open booths where the craftsmen were at work you could have seen the anvil, hammers, tongs, chisels, bellows, crucibles, and small furnaces.[13]

[1] 1 Sam. xvii. 7. [2] 1 Sam. xiii. 19; 2 Kings xxiv. 14; 2 Chron. xxiv. 12.
[3] 2 Tim. iv. 14. [4] 2 Kings xxv. 13; 1 Kings vii. 14.
[5] Judg. xvii. 4, 5; Isa. xl. 19; xli. 7; Jer. x. 14. [6] Gen. xxxviii. 18.
[7] Mal. iii. 2. [8] Lev. vi. 28; Num. xvi. 39. [9] Gen. xxiv. 30.
[10] Judg. v. 25. [11] Ex. xxviii. 11, 17; Job xxviii. 15—19.
[12] Isa. xli. 7; 1 Kings vii. 45; Num. xvii. 4; Isa. xliv. 12; Jer. x. 4; Ex. xxv. 11, 13; 1 Kings vi. 20 ff.; 2 Chron. iii. 5; Isa. xl. 19.
[13] Isa. xli. 7; xliv. 12; vi. 6; Ezek. xxii. 18; Ecclus. xxxviii. 28; Ex. xxxii. 4; Jer. vi. 29; Prov. xvii. 3.

Stone-cutting and masonry may have been learned by the Hebrews in Egypt; perhaps with additional hints from the Phœnicians after settling in Canaan.[1] Workers in wood, ready to turn their hand to any order, whether as carpenters, cabinet-makers, or wood-carvers, were numerous,[2] and there were also wheelwrights and basket-makers.[3] A spectator watching them would have seen that they plied the axe and hatchet, the gouge, the compasses, the saw, the plumb-line, and the level, and used red chalk for marking.[4] The trades of masons and plasterers were apparently united.[5] Brickmakers, as we find in Egypt, Babylonia, and Assyria, mixed their mortar with chopped straw—that is, "teben"—whether for burned bricks or for those simply dried in the sun.[6] The Hebrew potter, sitting at his work, turned the clay, which had first been kneaded with the feet, into all kinds of vessels on his wheel, which was generally of wood.[7] He could also, probably, glaze his ware, since the Egyptians could do so, though the art seems now to be lost in Palestine. Tanners are mentioned only in the New Testament;[8] but as the Pentateuch speaks of red leather of ram's skin, and of "tahash," or sealskin leather,[9] the Hebrews must have had tanners and curriers among them from the first. Shoemakers and tailors are mentioned only in the Talmud, since in Bible times clothing of all kinds seems to have been made by women.[10]

[1] Ex. xxviii. 11 ff.

[2] 2 Sam. v. 11; Isa. xliv. 13; Matt. xiii. 55; Mark vi. 3; Ex. xxxv. 36; xxv. 10 ff.; xxxvii. 1, 10, 15, 25.

[3] Num. vi. 15 ff.; Deut. xxvi. 2, 4; Judg. vi. 19.

[4] Isa. xliv. 13; x. 15; xxviii. 17; 2 Kings xxi. 13.

[5] 1 Chron. xiv. 1; 2 Kings xii. 12; Ezek. xiii. 11; Isa. xxviii. 17; 1 Kings vii. 9.

[6] Ex. v. 7; Gen. xi. 3; Nah. iii. 14; 2 Sam. xii. 31; Jer. xliii. 9.

[7] 1 Chron. iv. 23; Isa. xxix. 16; xlv. 9; lxiv. 8; Dan. ii. 41; Ps. xciv. 9; Job x. 9; Matt. xxvii. 7, 10; Isa. xli. 25; Jer. xviii. 3; Ecclus. xxxviii. 29.

[8] Acts ix. 43; x. 6, 32. [9] Ex. xxv. 5; xxvi. 14.

[10] 1 Sam. ii. 19; Prov. xxxi. 19 ff.; Acts ix. 39.

Weaving and spinning, whether for household use or for sale, were also left for the most part to the women,[1] though we find that men as well "wrought fine linen."[2] Flax was hackled with wooden combs; its coarser fibres made into nets and snares; its finer woven into yarn on the spindle, and this, when wound on reels, was woven on the loom with the shuttle.[3] A coarse stuff, known as "sak," was made of camels' and goats' hair into mourning-robes, girdles, and tent-covers; the black hair of he-goats being mostly used, as is still the case with the Bedouins.[4] The making of cloth for tent-covers was, indeed, a special trade followed by many, and, among others, by the Apostle Paul.[5] But besides these rougher manufactures, there were then, as now, in these strange-looking towns of Palestine, many others of a higher class. In the days of Amos rich men lay on couches of damask;[6] the clothing of the daughter of Tyre, married to the Israelitish king, was inwrought with threads of gold;[7] and curtains and hangings of mingled blue and purple and crimson, with inwoven figures or choice designs, were to be had for mansions or palaces, as well as for the Temple, while embroidered robes were common among the rich few.[8] Fullers busied themselves with dressing new webs, and cleansing old garments,[9] using natron, lye, wood-ashes, and

[1] Isa. xix. 9; Ezek. xxvii. 7; Prov. vii. 16; Ex. xxxv. 25; Prov. xxxi. 13, 19, 24; 1 Sam. ii. 19; 2 Kings xxiii. 7.

[2] 2 Chron. ii. 14; iii. 14.

[3] Isa. xix. 9; Judg. xv. 13; xvi. 14; Prov. xxxi. 19; Eccles. iv. 12; 1 Sam. xvii. 7; 2 Sam. xxi. 19; Job vii. 6.

[4] 2 Sam. iii. 31; Matt. iii. 4; Isa. iii. 24; Ex. xxvi. 7; Cant. i. 5.

[5] Acts xviii. 3.

[6] Amos iii. 12. This is the proper reading.

[7] Ps. xlv. 14.

[8] Ex. xxvi. 1, 31, 36; xxvii. 16; xxviii. 6, 39; xxxvi. 8, 37; xxxviii. 18; Judg. v. 30; Ezek. xvi. 10, 13; xxvi. 16; Ex. xxxv. 35; xxxix. 8.

[9] Isa. vii. 3; xxxvi. 2; Mark ix. 3.

fuller's earth in their trade,[1] which was carried on outside towns, on account of its malodorous characteristics.[2] Women, and also men, prepared fragrant salves, by mixing olive oil with various perfumes.[3] Bakers are first mentioned by Hosea, the old practice of bread-baking for each household by the women having, in a measure, fallen into disuse, so that there came to be a street of bakers in Jerusalem, 100 years later, when Jeremiah was alive.[4] Barbers make their first appearance during the Captivity,[5] but became numerous after that time, the rich having barbers in their households. Strange to say, dyers are not mentioned in the Bible, nor are glaziers, though the Jews were acquainted with glass through the Phœnicians, and perhaps through the Egyptians.

As in the East now, to work at a trade was no dishonour, though some crafts were in disfavour, and even disqualified men for certain positions. The dignity of high priest, for example, according to the Talmud, could not be granted to a weaver, a fuller, a salve-maker, a tanner, or a barber.

The grinding at the mill, assigned to Samson as his work in Gaza, must have been galling in the extreme to such a Hercules, since it was the work usually left to women, though, as I have said, I saw one man at Joppa sitting in the street turning a handmill. The blinded hero, however, may have been set to turn a millstone of the larger size, too heavy for men, and commonly turned by an ass; the strength once used so nobly being thus contemptuously degraded.

The women sit or kneel in grinding, and their mills

[1] Jer. ii. 22; Mal. iii. 2; Job ix. 30.

[2] 2 Kings xviii. 17; Isa. vii. 3; xxxvi. 2.

[3] Ex. xxx. 25, 35; 1 Sam. viii. 13; Eccles. x. 1; Neh. iii. 8; Ecclus. xxxviii. 7, 8.

[4] Hos. vii. 4; Jer. xxxvii. 21.

[5] Ezek. v. 1.

are still, doubtless, the same as those used in Bible times. Two stones, about eighteen inches or two feet across, rest one on the other, the under one slightly higher towards the centre, and the upper one hollowed out to fit this convexity; a hole through it, in the middle, receiving the grain. Sometimes the under stone is bedded in cement, raised into a border round it, to catch and retain the flour or meal as it falls. A stick fastened into the upper one served as a handle. Occasionally two women sit at the same pair of stones,[1] to lighten the task, one hand only being needed where two work together, whereas a single person needs to use both hands. It was, and continues to be, the same in Egypt: "the maid-servant that is behind the mill" may yet be seen in any village on the Nile, just as her predecessors were before the Exodus.[2] The revolution of the stones makes a rough grating sound, but it is a sign of life and plenty, and as such is pleasant to hear. It has, for this reason, been immemorially a familiar symbol of all that is most joyous in the remembrance of home; its absence marking desolation and sorrow. Hence Jeremiah, when painting the ruin to be brought on the land by the Chaldæans, tells his people that Jehovah will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the lamp.[3] Hence also "The Preacher" gives it as one mark of old age that the teeth fail, because they are few—taking the figure from women at the mill, so that the passage would read literally, "The women who have ground the meal slacken in their labour, because they are few," "and the sound of the grinding is low."[4] The utter destruction of the mystic Babylon is impressed on the mind by St. John

[1] Matt. xxiv. 41; Luke xvii. 35. [2] Ex. xi. 5. [3] Jer. xxv. 10.
[4] Eccles. xii. 3, 4. Dr. W. Nowack, *Der Prediger.*

in the statement that, "the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all" in it.[1] No creditor was allowed to take a millstone in pledge, since doing so would mean the wretchedness of a household: a lesson to our law-givers at this time. Some millstones, of a much larger size than those turned by hand, are driven by an ass, as already noticed, and it is to one of these that our Lord refers when He says that it were better that a millstone were hanged about the neck of him who offends one of His little ones, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.[2]

The cemetery of Gaza stretches over a wide space on the south of the town; the graves generally covered by a small erection of mud-brick, plastered over and white-washed. As, however, there is no fence, and man and beast take any liberties they like with the open space sown with the dead, its condition, like that of all Eastern cemeteries, is pitiable in the extreme. Yet, for a time, care of a grave is not neglected by the relatives of the departed. Every Friday men, women, and children come to the cemetery for their outing, which is celebrated near the resting-place of those once dear to them, whom they thus call to remembrance amidst what is, to them, holiday enjoyment. It is very common, also, to see women veiled in white from head to feet sitting on the ground beside a grave, having gone, like Martha and Mary, "to the grave, to weep there."[3] Funerals are melancholy scenes in the East. I have watched them frequently. First come the women of the family and female neighbours, draped entirely in white, often tossing their arms, throwing about their handkerchiefs, and screaming aloud in lament for the departed. In Egypt, and to some extent also in Palestine,

[1] Rev. xviii. 21. [2] Matt. xviii. 6; Mark ix. 42; Luke xvii. 1, 2.
[3] John xi. 31.

hired mourners, whose calling it is to "make an ado and weep,"[1] for so much an hour, swell the noise, for it is a great ambition with Orientals to have an imposing display at a funeral; "a better funeral," as they say, "than their neighbours could afford." Wailing women are an old institution in the Holy Land. We find "the mourners going about the streets" when Ecclesiastes was written.[2] Public demonstrations of grief are natural to Orientals, and have been so from the earliest ages. All Israel "mourned," that is, smote their breasts and wailed aloud, for the death of the son of Jeroboam;[3] and, ages before, Abraham came to Hebron to "mourn for Sarah, and to weep [or wail] for her."[4] "Rend your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn [that is, lift the loud wail] before Abner," said David to Joab, he himself following the bier, lamenting.[5] After the death of Josiah, at Megiddo, the wailing was so grievous through all Israel that the prophet in later days could find no better parallel for the future mourning in Jerusalem over Him "whom they have pierced."[6] Nor were even wailing and rending the clothes, or wearing sackcloth, the only expressions of grief at the death of loved ones. Notwithstanding the prohibition of the law,[7] men cut themselves, in the time of Jeremiah, with knives, and shaved the front of their heads, to honour the departed.[8] But this is not done now. The violence of the wailing may be imagined from the words used in Scripture: "The mourners [that is, the women] howled," says Jeremiah.[9] Their wailing was like "the shrieks and yells of jackals," says Micah,[10] "and they smote on their breasts with voices, sad as that

[1] Mark v. 39.
[2] Eccles. xii. 5.
[3] 1 Kings xiv. 13.
[4] Gen. xxiii. 2.
[5] 2 Sam. iii. 31.
[6] Zech. xii. 10, 11.
[7] Lev. xix. 28; Deut. xiv. 1.
[8] Jer. xvi. 6.
[9] Jer. iv. 8.
[10] Mic. i. 8.

of the dove,"[1] as our English people did at the news of the death of the Black Prince, when they beat their heads against the pillars of Canterbury Cathedral, and lifted up their voices in loud lamenting, with all the outward manifestations of sorrow once familiar to the Hebrews. The hired women of to-day, as they gather at the house of the dead, shriek out every endearing expression to stimulate the sorrow of those around, just as they did of old: "Ah, my brother!" "Ah, sister!" "Ah, lord!" or, "Ah, his glory!"[2]

Men and boys come after the women, often carrying flags, and chanting, "No God but God, and Mahomet is His prophet," repeating this over and over as they advance; the numbers following the open bier being large in proportion to the respect felt for its pale occupant. Just such a procession met our Lord as it passed through the gate of Nain, the widowed mother going before, and "much people of the city" following the remains of her only son.[3]

On arrival at the grave, a scene very strange to Western eyes takes place, the celebration of a "zikr," or memorial service, which is repeated, at stated intervals, at the graves of those long dead, if they have left a reputation for holiness. I saw one held at the tomb of a local saint at Gaza. A circle was formed round the grave by the men present, without respect to their social position; a poor beggar taking part on the same footing as a rich trader. About forty men, who had come to the spot with a flag and a drum, stood in the ring; Arabs, jet-black Nubians, peasants; most of them in turbans of green, red, white, or yellow, or striped; some with fezzes; one with the Arab "kefiyeh," or head-shawl; their clothing as vividly contrasted as their head-dresses in shape, colour,

[1] Nah. ii. 7. [2] Jer. xxii. 18; xxxiv. 5. [3] Luke vii. 12.

and material; one wearing the sheepskin coat of a shepherd, with the wool inside. A leader broke the preliminary silence by beginning to chant in a sing-song voice from the Koran, after which the whole body of men broke out into a repetition of the name of God, crying "Allah, Allah, Allah," as quickly as it could be uttered, for quite a long time; their bodies, meanwhile, swaying up and down, in what was doubtless intended for bowing in reverence; each holding his neighbour's hand. Groans followed, volley after volley, and then the swaying, mingled with loud grunts, began once more. Presently all broke out into a chant praising God, and celebrating the glory of the dead. Clapping of hands followed, and more chanting of the Koran, more violent bowing, groaning, and grunting, till everyone must have been thoroughly tired. The whole ceremony lasted about half an hour, and at its close the procession, which consisted wholly of men, formed behind the flag and drum and marched back to the town, to the beat of the monotonous music. The name given to this act of Divine worship, for such it is, is, as I have said, "zikr," a word closely connected with the Hebrew word for "a memorial" or "remembrance;" indeed, one may say, identical with it. The Psalmist uses it when he exhorts the righteous to "give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness."[1]

It is a pity to have to think of the wailing at death or at funerals as insincere, but how can that of hired women be anything else? The custom is falling into disfavour, partly on this account, and partly from its expense, but also from the unnatural constraint imposed by the rule that wailing shall be renewed at stated intervals in each week, for forty days.[2] The true mourners have as

[1] Ps. xcvii. 12; see also Ps. cxi. 4; cxii. 6; cxxxv. 13; cxlv. 7; Prov. x. 7.
[2] Gen. l. 3.

real sorrow as those of any other land, and many of the white-sheeted forms that go to the grave to weep, or do so in their homes, are those of broken-hearted mothers, sisters, or wives. But to weep, shriek, beat the breast, and tear the hair at so much an hour, is sorrow as artificial as that of our undertakers. Professional mourners are employed simply in obedience to the tyranny of custom, and to stimulate the real grief of others. "Consider ye and call for the mourning women," says Jeremiah, "that they may come; send for the cunning women [skilful in lamenting] that they may come; and let them make haste and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters."[1] Even the funeral processions of Mahommedans are far from being as decorous as those of Christians. The bier, on which the body lies dressed in its best clothes, is followed rather by a straggling and motley crowd than by mourners, for they talk and laugh in the most indifferent way as they go to the grave, where the "zikr," as I have described it, takes place, the women lamenting, and the men repeating with incredible volubility, "There is no God but God," &c., till they often foam at the mouth with their exertions. When they are tired, the body is laid in its shallow grave, which is quickly filled in, a few stones being heaped over it to keep off jackals and hyenas.

I made inquiries in a large fig-orchard at Gaza respecting the time of the ripening of the fruit; hoping to understand better than hitherto the curse of the fig-tree for its barrenness when "the time of figs was not yet."[2] The gardener, a middle-aged man, very thin by labour in the hot sun all his life, was probably not unlike those of ancient times. He wore an old fez, wound round with a coloured handkerchief to make it into a turban for pro-

[1] Jer. ix. 17, 18. [2] Mark xi. 13.

tection from the sun. His arms and legs were bare; his dress a white shirt, with a blue cotton sack over it. A steel, for striking fire, hung at his side from a steel chain attached to a belt or girdle of leather round his waist. The earliest figs, it appears, are called "dafour," which means "ripe before the time," and are ready at Gaza about the end of March, before the leaves are well out. Our Lord had a right, then, to expect that a tree rich in leaves should have had some figs on it by the middle of April, when He was passing, and the fact that there were none offered a striking text for a lesson on the worthlessness of profession without performance. It sometimes happens that in autumn—that is about October—some figs put out fresh leaves, and these are followed, it may be, by new figs. But the winter checks the ripening of such untimely growths, where it does not make them fall; the few still clinging to the branches till spring never becoming fit to eat. To show what he meant, the gardener forthwith pulled some of this kind, but they were withered and worthless.

It was on the 2nd of March, in the opening of spring, that I visited the garden. Fig-leaves were coming out on some trees; not, as yet, on others. Large beds of onions were standing a foot high, but they were thin in the stalk. Lettuce was large, and in great abundance; it is often, with bread, the only food of labourers. Tomato-plants were set out between the rows of lettuce; marrows were coming up, and vines were leafing, with rows of tomatoes between them also. The pomegranate was bursting out; beans were about nine inches high; garlic, somewhat shorter. A patch of tobacco, for the future personal use of the gardener, had just shown itself above the ground; and there was a small bed of parsley. The garden did not need watering, I was told; the rainfall and the night mists were

sufficient. Indeed, irrigation is little practised in Palestine, except in gardens around towns. On the plain of Sharon, for example, there is none for the fields, which yet give excellent crops.

The "abbas" of the men amused me. They are made of coarser or finer camels'-hair cloth, and are as nearly square as the human figure will allow; three holes being left for the head and arms, and short sleeves being generally added. The garment is open in front, to wrap tightly or wear loosely, as the owner thinks fit. In Gaza the women, besides the blue or white covering over their heads, wear an Egyptian veil: a thing made of cotton cloth, like a gigantic moustache, but hung over the nose, and sweeping down on each side to the bottom of the jaws, with a row of coins at the lower side for ornament; the rest of the face being left exposed. The "izar," or white cloak, worn by not a few of the fair sex, covers the person from head to foot. It was strange to hear that among the families in Gaza one was known as "European." Its members were, in fact, descendants of some Crusader who had remained in Palestine and married a native woman; his posterity still bearing the name of Frangi, or Franks. There are many such households in the Holy Land.

The heads of the children were a constant amusement, for in Gaza, as in Egypt and elsewhere, they are shaved in the most fanciful way. One gloried in a tuft on the very top of the skull; another, in a small ring of hair; still others had other designs. There is always, however, some tuft left for the benefit of the resurrection angel, to facilitate extrication from the grave, or, as some say, to help the spirits who, as Moslems believe, raise every dead man to his knees, in his grave, immediately after his burial, till he answers their questions and it is thus determined where his soul is to be till the general

judgment. One thing is effected at any rate by the general head-shaving; there is no shelter for vermin. Boys wear no head-covering, running about with their shaved skulls even in Egypt, but men protect themselves by a turban, to take the place of their hair; for their heads are shaved as well as those of boys. Arabs never shave the head or the beard.

The mission house in which I lived while at Gaza offered, in many ways, a curious example of the condition of Palestine. The stones of which it was built were from the ruins of ancient buildings on the sea-shore; some marble pillars over the door and elsewhere were spoil from Ascalon. The rafters were from Cilicia, in Asia Minor; the pine-wood, from Norway; the chairs were Austrian; the dresser was made in Gaza; the locks, hinges, glass, and paint came from England; the nails and tiles, from France; the lime, from the hills of Judæa.

More than a third of the children in Palestine, I was told, die in infancy, which is no wonder;[1] so ignorant are the people, and so dirty and insanitary are their houses. Ophthalmia is epidemic, with blindness as its frequent result.

Mahommedanism allows a man to have four wives, which one would think a liberal allowance, but as the Prophet was a polygamist on a much larger scale, those of his followers who can afford a greater number of wives feel quite at liberty to indulge in a harem. The cost, however, limits this odious practice to a very few cases, the vast majority of men being able to maintain only one partner. Divorce is the general way for getting a change. Indeed, it has become the established custom, since it not only saves expense but avoids the evils of rivalry. To send a woman

[1] A lady traveller in Egypt, moralising on this subject, said to me, "How sad the mortality among children is! I believe more die than are born"!

away is the easiest thing in the world; any excuse suffices. One man was mentioned to me, who had had sixteen wives; and a Gaza woman is, at present, making her seventeenth husband happy. Nor can it be said that people wait till they are old before visiting the marriage altar; boys of twelve are the husbands of girls of eleven. This strange state of affairs does not, however, seem to do permanent injury to either sex in this climate, for old men appear to be as numerous as elsewhere, while I was assured by the missionary that the women, when at their best, are so vigorous that he had known of cases where a matron, going to market with her eggs or cheese, would step aside on the way to give birth to a child; go on and sell her produce, and return home with her new baby.

I had the honour of a return visit from the kadi to acknowledge my attendance at his court. He came with his son, a boy of twelve, dressed, excepting the inevitable red fez, like a European, and already showing his budding virility, as he no doubt fancied, by puffing at a cigarette. A very shabby servant followed, as the only escort of the two. I found his excellency very gracious. The missionary had beaten him in a lawsuit raised by the Turk to prevent the English from having a mission house—for the authorities harass Protestants in every way—but the defeat was ignored for the time, and the greatest affability reigned. The kadi had kept me waiting a very long time in his wretched court-house, to show me some pieces of a lead coffin just dug up. "Had they any value as antiquities?" Unfortunately there was no inscription on the fragments, but only ornaments, including human heads: a proof that it must have been as old as the Crusading times, if not older, as Mahommedans never introduce likenesses of either man or creatures in their ornamenta-

tion, nor such scrolls of leaves. "Why was there no cleansing of the streets in Gaza?" "Ah, how would you get the money for it? Many townsmen are very rich, but they refuse to pay taxes." "But could you, as governor, make no improvements at all, to bring your city more to the front?" "Ah! no one can do anything. I tried very hard to get a harbour made for Gaza, through a company that was willing to construct it, but Turks are jealous of each other. If a clever man rises, all conspire to pull him down. The great men seek only their own interests, not those of the country. I could do nothing. Things must just go on as they are, if I am not to ruin myself. To show any zeal or enterprise would do so." Coffee, the nargileh, and cigarettes enlivened the interview, though the boy felt it so dull that he stole away downstairs to play with the children; the attendant following his charge. A few salaams and gracious assurances of eternal friendship, and the great man withdrew.

On the south-east of the town lies a hill—El-Muntar—to the top of which, it is said, Samson carried the city gates. Riding through the great cemetery, which in some parts was washed into gullies by the rain, and in others dug into great holes for gravel, the brick and plaster cubes or half-circles over older graves fallen, or falling, into decay; no fence or railing anywhere; stones, thorns, weeds, rubbish, choosing their own places without disturbance from any one—we reached the hill by a sandy lane, fringed with gardens and cactus-hedges. The ascent is rather steep from all sides; the slopes only thinly sprinkled with vegetation. A large tomb to some forgotten saint rises on the summit, where there is also a station, in sickly times, for a quarantine watcher, who signals the approach of caravans from Egypt, the track from which stretches away, alongside the telegraph, straight to the

south. The quarantine establishment lay about a mile to the east, among gardens: a stone building in front, with a quadrangle inside, but everywhere falling into decay. It has fine water, however; one of the soldiers kindly brought us a jar of it for a draught. Standing apart, the hill offered a wide landscape on all sides. On the south, the eye ranged over the green uplands, closed in, at a distance, by the low hills of the great desert, which in all ages has been so strong a protection to Palestine against invasion from Africa. Yet the warlike lords of Egypt and Assyria had braved it, as the trade caravans have done during the immemorial past, slowly passing over its desolate breadth on the "ship of the desert." Along this southern road Shishak had emerged from the sandy wilderness, at the head of the columns which humbled Rehoboam.[1] The hosts of Sargon, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, Assurbanipal, Nebuchadnezzar, and Cambyses had successively sounded their trumpet-blasts round the town, as they marched towards the Nile. Alexander the Great had camped with his glittering staff and steel-clad warriors for five months on the plains beneath, before he could force an entrance into Gaza "the Strong"; and the wailing must have been loud and sore when, on his storming the city, all the men were slain, and the women and children sold as slaves; a new population from a distance being brought to take their place. Pharaoh-Necho had smitten Gaza on his victorious march towards Carchemish,[2] and when afterwards overthrown by the Chaldæans his troops had retreated along this road to Egypt, devastating Philistia as they passed. Men had wailed aloud, women and children had filled the air with their cries "at the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of the war-horses, at

[1] 1 Kings xiv. 25 [2] Jer. xlvii. 1.

the bounding of the chariots, at the rumbling of their wheels"—fathers, in their flight, not looking back to save their children; and thus "baldness," the sign of mourning,[1] "had come on Gaza."[2] But Alexander's victory had been still more destructive. Gaza had bought Jewish captives as slaves, and had sold them as such to the hated Edomites, and now fire had been sent on its wall and had devoured its palaces, as Amos had long before threatened.[3] Destroyed again and again, its situation had always secured its being rebuilt. The Jews had triumphed over it under David, Hezekiah, and the Maccabees, but they had afterwards seen their sons sold in multitudes by Hadrian in its slave-marts. The Greeks and Romans had held it in their time, and now, for 1,400 years, it had been in the hands of the Arabs and Turks. A strange history on which to look down from the hill-top! The haughty armies that had spread their banners beneath—where were they? How was the tumult of ages stilled down! Infinite pity for dying man filled one's heart!

On the south-east lay the track to Beersheba, over the open field; and on the east the mountains of Judæa bounded the view; low tawny hills, with cactus-hedges over their tops, lying close below El-Muntar, and beyond them vast stretches of rolling pasture, ploughed land, wheat, and barley, to the foot of the mountain-range. On the west spread out a vast wood of olive and fig-trees, broken here and there by green fields, and by low, rough hills, reaching to the sand-dunes which were being slowly blown over the cultivated land. Beyond these, the great sea spread out to the horizon, its deep blue contrasting in rich effect with the yellow sand-hills at its edge. North-west lay Gaza, on its long, low hill, embowered in a sea of green, two minarets

[1] Micah i. 16. [2] Jer. xlvii. 2—5.
[3] Amos i. 7. See also Zeph. ii. 4; Zech. ix. 5.

rising from the town itself, and three from its suburb, Sejiyeh, the quarter of the weavers, a place bearing a very bad name. The sand-hills rose close to the town on the west. Cactus-hedges streamed in all directions, over height and hollow, and palms in numbers waved high in the air among the gardens, but not in groves as in Egypt. On the north-east a track over the wide common showed the way to Hebron.

CHAPTER IX.

ASCALON.

Ascalon lies on the sea-shore, about twelve miles north of Gaza. We had two horses already, and hiring two more, and a man as caretaker, at the cost of eight shillings for the day's service of the three, the commissariat for them included, we set off, after an early breakfast, a cavalcade of four—the missionary, his wife, a Levantine who spoke English, and myself—for the ruins of the great Crusading fortress. You ride out of the town to the west, through orchards shut in by hedges of prickly pear and mud walls, the reverse of picturesque. These, however, soon end, in this direction, and are succeeded by sand-hills, reaching to the sea three miles off, the journey across them being wearisome in the extreme. One could imagine himself travelling over a sand-ocean; long waves of yellow desolation rising in apparently endless succession, though interrupted here and there by reaches of hard soil quite as barren. Some of these looked specially weird, from the vast quantities of broken pottery—handles, mouths, spouts, and nameless fragments of all sizes and shapes—strewn everywhere over them, like the bones of an old cemetery. They, doubtless, mark the site of former towns or villages, yet not necessarily very ancient ones, since the really old surface of the land must, for the most part, be buried under the sand. How is it that such quantities of potsherds cover the face of so many spots in Palestine? Even

at Gerar, on the way to Beersheba, where there has been no settled community for ages, it is the same. At Memphis, in Lower Egypt, the ground is covered for miles with a rain of broken pottery, as if all the broken ware of the region, from the days of Menes, had come to the surface. Their crockery was no doubt as precious to the housewives of the Land of Promise, or of the Nile valley, as to the matrons of other countries, so that there can be only one explanation of the myriads of fragments so often met on ancient sites in the East: they must have accumulated during thousands of years, and the pottery that yielded such a harvest of sherds must have been wondrously brittle.

That it is so at present anyone who has tried to bring home samples must have found by sad experience; and the native women and girls have the same lament. "The pitcher broken at the fountain"[1] is a constant sorrow to the poor mothers and maidens; the least want of care in setting even a large jar down on the ground often sufficing to shiver it into a heap of fragments. Job could have found no difficulty in putting his hand on as many potsherds as he wished, when sitting on the town dust-hill, seeking a rude scraper for his person, in his misery.[2]

The stalks of grass which had bravely shown themselves for a time gradually disappeared, and so did the small flowers which had bordered the lanes at our starting, yet even among these desolate sand-hills there were oases more or less fertile, whether from the old surface being protected by the conformation of the ground, or as a triumph of industry over the restless sand, which stubbornly advances with every breath of wind. Right and left of us, at a distance, were open plantations of olives, and even some gardens; water, no doubt, being found

[1] Eccles. xii. 6. [2] Job ii. 8.

near them. Passing these, and crossing a sandy tract in which the horses sank to the fetlocks, we reached the low bluffs, forty or fifty feet high, near the shore, and, descending, were on the beach. A hill near was pointed out to me by the missionary as that to which General Gordon used to retire three times a day to read his Bible and pray, when he and my friend were living together in a tent on the strand.

As we walked the horses along, some Arab boys on their knees were busy at one spot scooping out holes in the sand, near the water's edge, for the purpose, it appeared, of getting fresh water for some poor lean cattle, which, at the moment, were scrambling down to it from the bluff as best they could. Such close neighbourhood of the sea and drinkable springs seems strange, but it is easily explained: the water, filtering down from the higher ground behind, in seeking its level comes near the surface just at the edge of the waves. It put me in mind of a plan I once saw adopted by an Indian on Lake Huron for filtering river-water which was black with pine-juice, and thus making it drinkable. He simply scooped a hollow in the bank, so low that the black water found its way into it through the sand, which kept back all impurities. Necessity is ever the mother of invention. I tasted the water in the hollows made by the Arab boys, and found it quite sweet.

The low hills or cliffs, varying in height from thirty to sixty feet, ran parallel with the shore as we travelled on; here, only fifty or sixty yards from the water; elsewhere, three or four times as far back; the sand hard and firm near the sea; loose and dry nearer the bluffs. Beds of sea-shells strewed the beach; chiefly those of limpets and clams. Thousands of larger and smaller blue jelly-fish lay near the water, left high and dry by the waves; sand-

pipers ran in small flocks along the edge of the shallows, and gulls, in numbers, sailed overhead. There was no sign of vegetation at first, but after a time a sprinkling of wiry grass showed itself, here and there, where the bluffs receded. Two Arabs, leading camels laden with squared stones from the ruins of Ascalon, for use in some building at Gaza, were the only living creatures to be seen, except the birds, and the few starved cattle at the beginning of the ride. Only one stream entered the sea; a very small one when I saw it, but formidable enough, I was assured, after rains. It flowed through a break in the cliffs, after draining a wide stretch of marshy land dotted with flags, beyond which a wady reaches across the plain to the mountains of Judæa, which pour out their torrents, in winter, through this channel.

Ascalon is approached, from the cliffs, over a long waving tract of hard sandy ground, sprinkled with wiry grass. The sea-cliffs retire in a semicircle as you reach the walls, which, indeed, were built on the vantage-ground thus provided, the space within sinking to a rich hollow, famous in all ages for its abundant supply of water. The sand of the beach is invaded, at each end of the arc, by an outcrop of low sandy knolls, the edge of a plateau running back into the country; their undulating surface of hard gravelly sand strewn with potsherds, and shimmering with faint green when one looks across it, though nearly bare under-foot. The walls of the grand old fortress rise in a half-circle from the top of the ridge, originally a cliff sixty or seventy feet high, but now a smooth but steep slope of drifted sand, both outside and within. On this stand the massive fragments of the walls, which stretch round like a deeply-bent bow; the sea being the bow-string. Not a house is to be seen in the space they gird, once noisy with the hum of men. Huge masses of

thick wall lie, here and there, on the inner slope, or on the beach, as if thrown down by earthquakes. Looking from the top of the mouldering rampart, the whole amphitheatre once occupied by the town was before me, but it showed only a few confused ruins; yonder, a long wall with a number of Gothic window-spaces, marking where the cathedral had once stood; at another place, an arch, the remains of a Crusading sanctuary. But amidst this wreck, unconquerable forces of nature, left free to display themselves, have vindicated their might; for the whole space within the yellow fringe of sand that slopes down only too far, looks like a mighty emerald set in a broad circlet of gold. One would never suspect, from appearances, that you need only dig a few feet below the rich soil to lay bare the skeleton of the once mighty Ascalon. Gardens and orchards, fenced with rude stone walls or prickly pear, and waving with palms, fig-trees, sycamores, tamarisks, olives, Johannisbrod trees, the lemon and the almond, and with patches of barley, flourish over the grave of long-buried generations. It is a sight almost unrivalled in Palestine, and all the more charming from the desolation around. The fig-trees were putting forth their leaves, so that some peasants at work could seek the cool of their shade at noon. Here and there vines —the best in Palestine—were budding, close up to the slope of sand. Two or three peasants in turbans and loose cotton shirts and drawers, bare-legged and with bare brown arms, were sowing or planting cucumbers, beans, and onions. Ascalon has always been famous for the last vegetable; the French word for one kind of them—*échalotes*, our "shalots"—being only a corruption of Ascaloniæ, their name in the Middle Age Latin of the Crusades. Abundant water has made the little valley a paradise, for thirty-seven wells dug by the

Crusaders, all sweet, and always full, still rejoice the hearts of the fellahs.

Two Arabs—one without a grey hair, though over sixty, with fine features; a pruning-hook scimitar-shaped and toothed, and a wooden pipe, in his hands, his head covered with a turban, a white "abba" reaching to his knees; the other still older, in a brown striped "abba" and a turban—both bare-legged, and with bare arms; one bare-footed, the other with the roughest of leather slippers, came up the slope of sand inside the walls, to where, thoroughly exhausted, we had thrown ourselves down under the shade of a fragment of wall, to enjoy the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.[1] Full of humour, they chatted and laughed with my friend, who spoke Arabic fluently. The country, they said, was waiting for some of the great nations to come and take it; it could never remain under its present government. The two waited about till we left, one of them kindly fetching water to us from a cistern in the valley.

Having rested awhile, I mounted again to ride round the walls, but it proved an impossible task, the way being barred by ruins after I had gone two-thirds of the circle. The fragments of walls that remain are built of small-sized pieces of the sandstone of the ridge below, set in a wondrous mortar, largely composed of sea-shells, and harder than the stones it holds together. Remains of the proud towers that once rose at intervals as flank defences are still to be seen—the Maiden, the Shield, the Bloody Tower, the Admiral's, and the Bedouin's.[2] Looking out from these, the warders of 700 years ago could watch all that approached from the plains; an outstanding fort, still seen in ruins, helping them to have as wide a sweep as possible, and guarding the

[1] Isa. xxxii. 2. [2] *Pal. Fund Memoirs*, vol. iii.

way to the great fortress from the military road in the interior. The ever-encroaching sands, fine as dust, have blown in through the rifts and fissures in the walls, and at some points have overwhelmed the rich garden-space. To the east, the whole neighbourhood lies under a winding-sheet of sand, through which in some places the tops of fences, and olive and fig-trees, still struggle. The great gate stood on this side, towards the land, opening into the town by a side passage through a projecting mass of wall. A smaller gate can also be traced on the south-west. The city inside the walls once stretched five-eighths of a mile from north to south, and three-eighths from west to east; not a very large place, according to Western notions. The bottom of one of the towers, twenty feet across and six feet high, lies overturned, on the east, while fragments still erect seem to defy time and the elements. All along the walls great pillars of Egyptian granite, one of them seventeen feet long and a yard across, are built into the masonry to bind it together, or have fallen to the ground. Herod the Great had brought these from Assouan, at tremendous cost, to beautify the city which boasted of being his birthplace, but the Crusaders, troubled by no reverence for antiquity, utilised them to strengthen the defences. Some indeed may have been much older than the time of Herod, for an inscription on the walls of Karnak informs us that Ascalon was taken by King Rameses the Second, the Egyptian oppressor of Israel. Marble bases and Corinthian capitals of pillars lay among the gardens, and at some points, columns, discovered by digging a slight depth, were waiting to be broken up and carried away as building-stone, or to be burned into lime. I counted twenty deep and beautifully-built cisterns, of hewn stone—each with a well-plastered tank at its side —still in daily use, 700 years after they had been made

by the Crusaders. But even these are not safe from mean cupidity; for their carefully-chiselled stones are worth money in Gaza and in the villages of the Philistine plain, and are therefore carried off thither on asses, or, as we saw by the way, on camels. Here and there were heaps of small fragments of pillars and cut stones gathered from the surface, even the paths between the gardens being filled deep with them, so that it was not easy to ride through. Larger pieces of marble, often showing traces of fair sculpture, abounded, as did round stones of pillars, apparently broken apart to obtain the lead clamps that bound them together. The ropes at the wells were let down over marble columns laid prostrate, deep grooves in these showing how many centuries they had been in use.

The walls ran along the shore for some distance at each side of the town, keeping to the stony ridge, which maintained an average height of perhaps forty feet above the sea; sinking to it abruptly on the west. At both ends great masses of wall, like rocks, had fallen, and lay in the sea or on the shore. To get to the sands it was necessary to follow one of the paths through the gardens, the cliffs being dangerous from their steepness. A sea-wall had originally run out into the waves, to protect the town where it was most exposed, but it has long since nearly disappeared. Six marble pillars were lying at one spot under the restless play of the waves, and near them were some peasants enjoying a bath in the clear, inviting water, quite indifferent to the imposing view of the fortifications stretching aloft on all sides behind.

Unfortunately for Ascalon, though the line of cliffs recedes in a half-circle from the shore where the city stood, the line of the shore itself had no indentation to form a harbour. The inducement to make it a town therefore lay in the rich soil and the delicious climate of the little

bay of land. No keel or sail now parts or shadows the sea at the spot once so famous, and even in past ages, with sea-walls and breakwaters to shelter them in some measure, ships must always have been very insecure when lying in the so-called port. It could never indeed have been a proper harbour, for there is no sign of a creek or inlet of the sea to shelter vessels. It was in fact so difficult to approach the city by water, in the times of the Crusaders, in spite of the moles and piers which they had constructed, that one of them informs us no craft could enter it for eight days after the army had landed, on January 4th, 1192. Provision boats at last got in, but the storm returned, and the troops began again to be in want before the boats could come back to re-victual the place.

It was touching to stand amidst such ruins and recall the hoary past. Before Israel left Egypt, Ascalon was one of the five cities of the Philistines; indeed, it had been taken, as we have seen, by the great Rameses, the contemporary of Moses. In the time of the Judges, while the Hebrews were urged on by their first enthusiasm, it fell for a short time into the hands of the tribe of Judah,[1] but only to be soon retaken by its old population, in whose hands it permanently remained. The temple of Derketo, the Phœnician Venus, seems to have stood beside the still flowing stream of the Wady-el-Hesy, of which I have spoken; the waters offering the opportunity of preserving the fish sacred to her, in pools made for their use.[2] It seems strange, with our notions, that an image which was half woman and half fish should be worshipped, but antiquity was the childhood of the world, and symbols

[1] Judg. i. 18.

[2] Diod. Sic. (ii. 4) has a curious legend respecting it. The position of the lake is only conjectural.

were therefore natural to it. Like Dagon, her male complement, Derketo had come to Palestine through the Phœnicians, or, perhaps, had been brought by the Philistines themselves, when they migrated, in pre-historic ages, from the east to the west. In any case, it was in keeping with the position of the people of Ascalon, on the shore of the great sea, that in their worship of the reproductive powers of nature they should select the fish as the emblem of fecundity. For ages, men and women thronged to her altars, the warlike and yet keenly commercial Philistines retaining their existence as a nation—at intervals, indeed, dependent—till Alexander the Great finally crushed them. From that time Egypt and Syria raised their standards, by turns, on the old walls of Ascalon till it fell into the hands of the Jews under the Maccabees.[1] David, in his touching lament over the fall of Saul and Jonathan on Mount Gilboa, had cried, "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ascalon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph."[2] But the sun of the once mighty people had now sunk for ever. Jeremiah had foretold that "he that holdeth the sceptre is cut off from Ascalon; it is a desolation; it is no more inhabited; it is a desolation,"[3] and the curse was beginning to be fulfilled. Its full accomplishment, however, was for a time delayed.

Within the hollow cup now filled with gardens Herod the Great first saw the light, in some long-vanished palace, built among the closely-packed streets; and here, in after-days, he built "baths and costly fountains, and a cloistered

[1] 1 Macc. x. 86; xi. 60.

[2] 2 Sam. i. 20. The Ascalon noticed in the history of Samson may have been a town of that name near his own country in the hills. He could hardly have ventured into a great place like the sea-side Ascalon, to slay thirty Philistines.

[3] Jer. xxv. 20; xlvii. 5—7.

court."[1] After his death, Salome, his sister, received the city from Cæsar as part of her dowry; and in her days, as in those of Herod, alongside the worship of Derketo flourished that of a multitude of Greek and Roman gods and goddesses, which were not dethroned till the days of Arcadius, 400 years later. In the last great Jewish war, Ascalon suffered terribly; the Hebrews having turned against it, in fierce revenge for its population having massacred 2,500 of their race in an outbreak of anti-Semitism of a very malignant type. But before the Crusades it had risen, once more, under the Arabs, to be a flourishing town, and it was only wrested from them in A.D. 1153, after a seven months' siege, by Baldwin III. Thirty-four years later it was retaken by Saladin, and dismantled, so that the reign of the Crusaders was short. It had, in fact, fallen before Richard the Lion-hearted set foot in the Holy Land. To make its ruin more complete, its miserable harbour was filled up with stones, so that for 700 years no vessels could make it their haven. Fierce and bloody battles between Saracen and Crusader stormed round and within the half-circle of these walls. Merchants of all lands brought their wares to it while it was a Christian city, but from the time that Saladin destroyed it, in 1187, it has been desolate. The Ascalon of the Crusaders now lies under many feet of soil, from which memorials of its greatness in days far earlier than the Middle Ages continue, as we have seen, to be dug up. Beside the marble pillars thus recovered, and laid at the edge of each well to ease the drawing of water, is generally to be found a richly-carved base or capital, of which the only use is that the brown peasant-girl may tie the well-ropes to it when she wishes to do so.

A little to the east of the ancient walls, on the other

[1] Jos. *Bell. Jud.*, i. 21, 11.

side of a little valley, lies the village of New Ascalon, or El-Jurah, embosomed in rich green; a second small oasis in the sand-wastes around. Beyond it, to the south-east, is the village of Nalia, north and south of which stretches quite a wood of olives, some of them growing in the very midst of sandy desolation. Like the famous avenue of the same tree at Gaza, these are said to be very ancient, though it is hard to tell the age of an olive, for its pierced and rugged stem looks old almost from the first. At Gaza, however, there is no doubt as to the great age of the trees, which seem to justify the local belief that none have been planted since the Moslem conquest, though the idea that those of the great avenue north of the town date from the time of Alexander the Great, gives them an antiquity too vast for ready belief. That they may be many centuries old, however, is not improbable, for the tree seldom dies, shooting out suckers from the root as the trunk fails, till a group of these take its place—the "olive-plants" round the parent stem, to which, as I have noticed,[1] the Psalmist compares a family round the household table.[2] After a time one of these, duly grafted, fills the room formerly occupied by its predecessor, and thus the grove is perpetuated without much trouble to its owners. I like to linger on the story of the olive; its shade is so cool and grateful; its uses so many and so beneficent; its very leaves so abiding an emblem of peace and good-will, from the days of the Flood to our own. The natives do not commonly seek the shade of the fig-tree, believing that it causes ophthalmia, but they delight to sit under the olive.

The hope of the peasant at Ascalon, that some of the Frank nations would soon come and take Palestine, is common to the whole population. Turkish government consists simply in collecting the taxes and quelling tumults,

[1] See *ante*, p. 141. [2] Ps. cxxviii. 3.

which often break out through oppression. The crops are assessed before the harvest, and are frequently left till over-ripe, the owner having to bribe the official with a larger share of them, to secure his coming in time to save what is left, before all the grain falls out of the dry ears. The taxes moreover are fixed without any regard to the amount of the crops, good years and bad having to pay alike, though nothing be left to the poor tiller of the ground. Bashi-Bazouks are sent out to gather the grain or fruit claimed by Government, a fact that helps one to realise the extortion and villainy that follow. The Turk is the king of the locusts, his officials their desolating army. If the "kaimacan," or governor, goes out with the soldiers, he and his followers must be fed and housed in the best style at the cost of the village. The soldiers also live at free quarters, and fleece the unhappy peasants at their will.

It has often been a question whether the word[1] translated "apples" and "apple-tree" in our Bible[2] should be so rendered. Tristram, among others, thinks that this fruit "barely exists in the Holy Land," since, though a few trees are found in the gardens of Joppa, they do not thrive, and have a wretched woody fruit. He says, moreover, that he scarcely ever saw the apple-tree till he reached Damascus, except on a few very high situations in Lebanon.[3] On the other hand, Dr. Thomson maintains that "Ascalon is especially celebrated for its apples, which are the largest and best I have seen in this country,"[4] and Sir Charles Warren specifies apples as amongst the fruits the locality yields.[5] Dr. Otto Delitzsch,[6] also, has no

[1] "Tappuah."
[2] Cant. ii. 3, 5; vii. 8; viii. 5; Prov. xxv. 11; Joel i. 12.
[3] Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 334; *Land of Israel*, p. 604.
[4] *Land and Book*, p. 545
[5] *Picturesque Palestine*, iii. 166. [6] Riehm, p. 68.

hesitation in thinking the apple is meant, noting how widely it must have been grown in former times from the fact that towns are called after it, as Tappuah, "Apple-town;" Beth-Tappuah, "the Home of the Apple;" and En-Tappuah, "the Apple Fountains;"[1] and adding that it is still grown in various parts of Palestine. That it does grow at Ascalon and in the country round, is beyond dispute, as my friend at Gaza was invited to rent an apple-orchard, and tells me that the fruit is both good and plentiful. It is possible, however, that the Hebrew word may stand for the quince as well as the apple, as *mēlon*, in Greek, means the apple or the quince, the peach, the orange or citron, or the apricot,[2] though in each case the name of the country from which the particular fruit first came is affixed, to secure exactness. Tristram thinks Dr. Thomson may have mistaken the quince for the apple, and has no hesitation in expressing his conviction that the apricot alone is the apple of Scripture. Yet Dr. Thomson says that he saw quite a caravan start from Ascalon for Jerusalem laden with apples which would not have disgraced even an American orchard, and I was informed in Jerusalem that the fruit, native-grown, is common in the market in autumn.

How striking is it, when one thinks of the fish-god, Dagon, worshipped in Gaza and elsewhere, and the fish-goddess, Derketo, honoured in Ascalon, to read that the Hebrews were prohibited from making "the likeness of any fish," lest they might corrupt themselves by using it for a graven image![3] How easily they might have fallen into this idolatry, and how hard any form of worship is to extirpate when once accepted, is seen in the curious fact

[1] Josh. xii. 17; xv. 34, 53; xvi. 8; xvii. 7.
[2] Liddell and Scott.
[3] Deut. iv. 18. Boch. *Hierozoic.*, i. 43.

that sacred fish are still preserved in various pools or fountains in Syria.

In returning we did not reach the sand-hills leading to Gaza till dark: an awkward matter, even with a plain and well-known road, but still more so with the ghastly sand stretching out in the faint moonlight, everywhere alike white. Our guide, who had kept faithfully with us for half the journey back, had been invisible for some time, having very likely taken a short cut to Gaza over the dunes, before sunset. What was to be done? Our lady comrade feared we should have to make the sand our coverlet for the night. The Levantine and the missionary, however, declared they knew the way; only follow them and all would be well. But it was soon clear that they had lost their reckonings, if ever they had any. To make matters worse, the moon hid itself behind clouds. "We wandered east, we wandered west; we wandered many a mile," as the old ballad says, but at last a tree or two could be made out, and we knew that the gardens of Gaza were near. Yet, at what part of them were we, for they stretch along for miles? Moreover, the paths, when we reached them, were far from safe. At one spot I had noticed a deep excavation across almost the whole road; a pit, made, I was told, by the shopkeepers of the town, to get sand to strew in their booths; for, within wide limits, every man, under the indolent rule of the Turk, does what is good in his own eyes. It was now ten o'clock, and the narrow lanes between the gardens seemed a repetition of Rosamond's bower. We might have repeated, like Sterne's starling, "We can't get out." Hope seemed laughing at us. At last the wretched dogs proved our unintentional friends. We had reached their happy hunting-grounds, and they forthwith gave voice from every garden, till in the end they roused a watchman from his slumbers,

and brought him to see what had happened. A boy whom he sent soon ended the comedy, and led us safely home, somewhere about eleven o'clock, tired and hungry enough.

In a town like Gaza the bark of dogs and the call of the muezzin to prayer are almost the only sounds that disturb either day or night. Five times a day a voice is heard from the minarets of the mosques, summoning the faithful to their devotions—at sunset, when it has grown quite dark, at daybreak, at noon, and midway in the afternoon. At sunrise, noon, and sunset, the muezzin lets the exact moment pass before raising his call, the Prophet having wished it to be so, since infidels prayed at these three times, and it would never do for the prayers of his followers to enter heaven along with those of unbelievers. The cry rises solemnly four times, "God is most great." Then follows, twice, "I testify that there is no God but God;" then comes, also twice, "I testify that Mahomet is the apostle of God;" then twice, again, "Come to prayer;" once more, twice, "Come to security;" then, twice, "God is most great," and "There is no God but God." The whole is chanted to a special air, and sounds far better, in my opinion, than the jangle of bells which takes its place with us. Among the Hebrews, the blast of a ram's-horn trumpet from the Temple served the same purpose, but the Jews seem to have had only three fixed hours of prayer[1]—"evening," or the ninth hour, that is, three o'clock in the afternoon, when the evening sacrifice was offered;[2] "the morning," or third hour, the time of the morning sacrifice, that is, nine o'clock; and the sixth hour, or noon-day. Some, however, like the author of the 119th Psalm, could not content themselves with this rule, but paid their devotions "seven times

[1] Ps. lv. 17; Dan. vi. 10. [2] Acts iii. 1, 10; Dan. ix. 21.

a day;" adding their private prayers to those fixed by general custom.

As the Mahommedans turn their faces in worship to their holiest sanctuary at Mecca, so the Jews turned towards the Temple at Jerusalem in their devotions;[1] and just as the former, even now, kneel down wherever they happen to be when the proper hour arrives, so the ancient Jews stood and prayed wherever they might be at the appointed times; some of them, of no great worth, taking care that the moment should overtake them when they were in the most public places, such as the corners of the streets.[2] Their descendants still, in their universal dispersion, follow the same practice, turning their faces, wherever they may be, towards their beloved Jerusalem. To enable them to do so in their synagogues, the door is placed, if possible, so that the worshipper as he enters shall face the far-distant sacred spot, just as in mosques there is a niche to indicate the point to which the supplications should be addressed. It has been the same in many religions from the earliest times. The twenty-five apostate elders seen by the prophet in his vision[3] had their backs turned to the Temple and their faces to the east, to worship the rising sun, and it may have been with the intention of preventing this that the Temple entrance was on the east, so that the worshipper looked westward in directing his prayers to the Holy of Holies. Like the Sun-Worshippers, the Greeks and Romans prayed towards the east, so building their temples and placing the statues of the god worshipped in them that everyone should approach in the proper direction.

I hardly know a more touching sight than the hour of prayer in the East. Rich and poor forthwith set their

[1] 1 Kings viii. 44—48; Dan. vi. 10; Ps. v. 7; xxviii. 2; cxxxviii. 2.
[2] Matt. vi. 5. [3] Ezek. viii. 16.

faces to the holy place of their faith, sometimes after spreading their prayer-carpet, often with no such preparation, and begin their devotions in absolute indifference to all around them; now bowing the head, then kneeling and touching the earth repeatedly with their brow; presently rising again, and repeating their homage and prostrations to the Unseen with the utmost fervour. Among the Hebrews, in the same way, the postures of devotion included standing, kneeling, and bending to the earth, the hands being lifted up or spread out before Jehovah;[1] and it will be remembered that in the only instance in which the posture of our Lord in prayer is recorded, He first kneeled, and then fell prostrate on the ground.[2]

At Ascalon and Gaza there are, perhaps, more palm-trees than in any other part of the Holy Land, for Beirut, where they are very numerous, is in Syria. Rising, with slender stem, forty or fifty, at times even eighty feet aloft —its only branches the feathery, sword-like, pale-green fronds, from six to twelve feet long, bending from its top— the palm attracts the eye wherever it is seen. Inside the coronal that bends round the summit, the marrowy spear which forms the growing head of the tree is hidden—the promise of a new crown of fronds, which, in its time, will replace the old. The fruit-buds spring from the point where the pendent leaves hang from the trunk, shooting forth in April with a grateful perfume, and gradually enlarging till they hang down in long clusters of whitish yellow flowers, which shine from afar amidst the surrounding green. Twelve thousand blossoms are sometimes counted on a single pollen-bearing tree, those which bear

[1] 1 Kings viii. 54; 2 Chron. vi. 13; Ezra ix. 5; Ps. xcv. 6; Dan. vi. 10; Josh. vii. 6; 1 Kings xviii. 42; Neh. viii. 6; Ps. xxviii. 2; cxxxiv. 2; Ex. ix. 33.

[2] Luke xxii. 41; Mark xiv. 35.

fruit having fewer. Only one of the two kinds yields dates, and that only when the wind, or artificial aid, strews the dust of the other on its flowers. Five months after this has been done great clusters of ripe red fruit glitter below the leaves, supplying to her lover,[1] ages ago, an image for the swelling beauty of the bosom of Sulamith. By piercing the stem immediately under the coronal a kind of drink is obtained, which is known as palm-wine, strongly intoxicating, but soon turning to vinegar. The fibres of the leaf-stalk and fruit-stalk are separated for cords; the leaves are woven into baskets, mats, and other conveniences, and the stems serve as beams.

Egypt is especially the land of the date-palm, which shuns the zone of rains, and yields its best only in subtropical or tropical rainless countries,[2] and such a region the Nile valley supplies. There, groves of palms are at once the beauty and the wealth of extensive districts; great heaps of dates exposed for sale in every street of each town or village inviting the poor to buy what is their chief support, and offering the wanderer in the desert the food he can most conveniently carry. Palms were once abundant in the Sinai peninsula also, for the Hebrews camped there amidst a grove of dates;[3] but the terrible rain-storms of these parts have uprooted all the trees that once clothed the now bare hill-sides.[4]

In Palestine the palm does not ripen farther north than some miles south of Gaza, though it is met with in nearly every part of the land, especially along the sea-coast. Even at Jerusalem, though that city lies 2,500 feet above the Mediterranean, palms grow in the open air, but they yield no fruit. In the same way we find a whole grove of

[1] Cant. vii. 8. Date-clusters, not those of grapes, are meant.
[2] Ritter, *Erdkunde*, xvi. 3, 41 (Berlin, 1852).
[3] Ex. xv. 27. [4] See *ante*, p. 123.

them close to Nazareth, equally beautiful, but they yield only a grateful shade, or branches for yearly festivals. Deborah, the judge, once lived under a palm-tree on Mount Ephraim,[1] and, indeed, the tree was anciently so common as to supply the symbol adopted by Shechem and Sepphoris on coins struck for these towns under the Romans. It appears, moreover, as an emblem of the whole land on the medals which commemorate the victories of Vespasian and Titus. But the Israelite could not enjoy the ripe fruit except in the hot depression of Jericho, once known as "the City of Palms,"[2] at Tamar in the far south, and at Engedi, or Hazezon-Tamar—"the Place of Palm-cutting"—from the villagers there cutting out the sweet central marrowy crown from the head of the tree.[3] Still, the Hebrew delighted in the long, slender beauty of the stem and its hanging fronds, and mothers fondly called their new-born girls by the name of the tree —Tamar—as we see in the case of the daughter-in-law of Judah, and the sister of Absalom;[4] hoping, no doubt, that they might one day grow up to be tall and graceful maidens. The sacred lyrist looked up with a poet's eye to the long, shining, beautiful fronds of the palms growing in the forecourt of the Temple, and sang in his joy that "the righteous would flourish like the palm-tree."[5] The interior of Solomon's Temple was richly adorned with gilded palm-trees, cut out in relief on the walls, and the ideal sanctuary of Ezekiel also was beautified in the same way.[6] Palm-branches have from the remotest ages been the symbol of triumphal rejoicing, ancient Palestine, like other lands, using them to express such public gladness. About 140 years before Christ, Simon Maccabæus, having

[1] Judg. iv. 5. [2] Deut. xxxiv. 3; Judg. iii. 13; 2 Chron. xxviii. 15.
[3] Knobel. 2 Chron. xx. 2. [4] Gen. xxxviii. 6; 2 Sam. xiii. 1.
[5] Ps. xcii. 12, 13. [6] 1 Kings vi. 29; vii. 36; Ezek. xl. 16.

won back Jerusalem for his people, entered it accompanied by a vast multitude, "with thanksgiving, and branches of palm-trees, and with harps and cymbals, and with viols and hymns and songs, because there was destroyed a great enemy out of Israel."[1] And who can forget how a Greater Deliverer passed down the slopes of Olivet and wound up the height of Moriah, attended by a very great multitude, some of them spreading their garments on the way, that as a king He might ride over the tapestry thus made on the moment; others cutting down branches from the trees and throwing them at His feet, to strew His path with all they had for flowers, while crowds took branches of palm and went forth to meet Him, crying, "Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord!"[2]

The palm lent itself readily to sacred imagery. The Psalmist, who daily saw it—"planted in the house of the Lord, and flourishing in the courts of our God, bringing forth fruit in old age, and full of sap and green,"[3] employs it as an emblem of the righteous, than which nothing could be more striking or appropriate. It is still borne by pilgrims on Palm Sunday, in commemoration of Christ's entry into Jerusalem; the bier of His followers is often covered with it, as a symbol of their victory over death, and the great multitude of the redeemed in glory are pictured as standing "before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands."[4]

[1] 1 Macc. xiii. 51.
[2] Matt. xxi. 8; Mark xi. 8; John xii. 13.
[3] Ps. xcii. 13.
[4] Rev. vii. 9.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE WAY TO GERAR.

Gerar, the centre of the district in which Isaac lived during nearly the whole of his quiet, uneventful career, has been identified with Umm-el-Jerrar, a few miles on the way to Beersheba, which is about thirty miles south-east of Gaza. Hiring horses at the rate of about seven shillings a day for three, including the wage of a gaily-dressed guide, we set off in the early morning. Our conductor's appearance was certainly striking: a pink-striped under-tunic covered his cotton leggings and shirt, a blue jacket, with black braid, surmounting it; a red sash set off his waist, with two flint horse-pistols, silver-mounted, but very old, stuck in his girdle; a yellow silk striped "kefiyeh" covered his head, its golden ends fluttering over his shoulders, with the usual cincture of soft camels'-hair rope round his brow, keeping all in place: a romantic costume with which the decidedly shabby pair of elastic boots that held his lower extremities was hardly in keeping. The horse he rode seemed as fiery as himself, but it had to lament the indignity of a closely-docked tail, the only instance of this I met in the East.

The road lay to the south, through sandy lanes, between orchards concealed by huge cactus-hedges. Women passed, duly veiled, with jars of water, or with bundles of firewood from pruned trees, on their head or shoulders; asses, with stones in each coarse pannier,

from some surface quarry or old ruin. Larks sang in the air and on the ground. An Arab stood beside two small cows which were feeding at the roadside; his coat a sheep's skin, with the wool inside, over his "abba." The cold of the mornings and nights, which causes rheumatism to be very general among the fellahin, makes such warm clothing a necessity for those who are exposed. Still more asses, laden with stones, went past; small boys, in blue shirts and old fezzes, driving them. A light plough was being drawn by a camel at one place; by under-sized oxen at another. The telegraph-poles of the line to Egypt ran alongside the track. On the right were the sand-hills, blowing farther inland each year. Donkeys with sour milk in skin bottles;[1] two women planting vegetable marrows, cucumbers, and the like; five dirty peasants on asses, riding into Gaza; Arab shepherds in old brown "abbas" tending their flocks on the slope to the left, after we had reached the open country; their tents, black and low, close at hand, behind; more ploughs, drawn by camels; and an Arab on a camel, riding into Gaza—gave life to the landscape as we rode on; miles, however, intervening between the first and the last of this motley succession.

The dress of Southern Palestine is very much alike for all classes. A turban, fez, or "kefiyeh;" a cotton shirt, with, at times, a coloured cotton tunic over it; a cloth jacket in some cases, an "abba" in others, a long blouse of blue cotton in most; cotton drawers, with or without the luxury of coloured cotton trousers, short-legged, over them; the blouse hiding the body, even when it is the only garment—form the limited wardrobe of the general population.

[1] Homer speaks of skin bottles. The heralds bore the covenant sacrifices of the gods through the city: two lambs, and, in goat-skin bottles, the wine of the field that cheers man (*Iliad*, iii. 247).

The sole difference with the richer people is a finer quality of the material. Women seem to have merely one long blue cotton sack, neither tight nor very loose, its sleeves at times tied over the head, its lower part reaching the feet. A veil hangs from their eyes down their breast, though at times a moustache-like nose-veil is thought enough, while at others even the brow is hidden as well as the cheeks. Arms and feet are bare in both sexes, only a few persons using leather slippers, without backs or heels—for the boots of our guide were a phenomenon, secured, no doubt, as a gift from some dignified friend, after they had served him faithfully till he was tired of them.

The sour milk which we passed, carried in skin bottles, is dear to the heart of all natives. They call it "leben"—the "halab" known to the Hebrews from the earliest ages. Milk, indeed, in different forms and preparations, was a main article of food among the ancient Jews. Children were not weaned, at least in some cases, till they were three years old, as is expressly stated by a mother in Maccabees;[1] but throughout the whole of life, milk of the herd or flock continued one of the great staples of food; as at this day it constitutes almost the sole nourishment of the Bedouin. "Such of the Arabs of the central portion of the great desert of El-Tih" (on the south of Palestine), says Prof. E. H. Palmer, "as are not fortunate enough to participate in the profits of conveying the pilgrim caravan across the desert to Akabah, on its way from Egypt to Meccah, live almost entirely on the milk of their sheep and camels. In many other parts of the desert milk forms the sole article of diet obtainable by the Bedouin, and I have heard a well-authenticated case of an Arab in the north of Syria, who for three years had not tasted either water or solid food. So long as the flocks

[1] 2 Macc. vii. 27.

and herds can find an abundance of succulent herbage, they can dispense to a great extent with drink. An Arab, therefore, in selecting a spot for his encampment, regards the existence of a good supply of pasturage as of much greater importance than the proximity of water."[1] "The Arabs inhabiting the mountains of Moab are essentially a pastoral people, though they do cultivate the soil to a slight extent. Every other consideration is, therefore, sacrificed to the safety and welfare of their flocks and herds, and the spots selected for their encampments are nearly always the most elevated portions of the plateau, the vicinity of which affords good and extensive pasturage. These are necessarily remote from the streams and water-springs, the small amount of water required for the use of the camp being brought by the women, either upon donkeys' backs or their own. Sour or fresh milk is always plentiful, and placed at the disposal of the visitor, but often, on asking for a drink of water, I have found that such a thing has not been seen for days in the encampment."[2] It was thus natural for Abraham to take the favourite "sour, curdled milk"—"leben"—and sweet milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set them before his guests.[3] It was, in fact, precisely the same welcome as a Bedouin sheikh now gives to strangers he wishes to honour—a calf being the rare sign of high distinction substituted for the more ordinary male kid.[4] That "the teeth" of Judah should be "white with milk," was just such a blessing as the patriarch Jacob, a "plain man dwelling in tents,"[5] would think best worth giving. "Curdled milk of kine, and milk of sheep,"[6] were declared

[1] Palmer, *Desert of the Exodus*, i. 294.
[2] *Ibid.*, i. 488.
[3] Gen. xviii. 8.
[4] Palmer, *Desert of the Exodus*, i. 489.
[5] Gen. xlix. 12; xxv. 27. [6] Deut. xxxii. 14.

special glories of the Land in the last song of Moses; and it was exactly what an Arab woman would have done to-day when Jael, on Sisera's asking for "a little water, because he was thirsty," opened a skin of "leben" and gave him drink. Perhaps it was an undesigned aid to her contemplated treachery that this favourite beverage, as I have already noticed, is strongly soporific. A clergyman who drank freely of it in a Bedouin camp, when suffering much from sleeplessness and nervous excitement, brought on by great fatigue, was so overcome by its drowsy effects that, after resting for half an hour, it was only with the greatest difficulty he roused himself to continue his journey.[1] Jael may, however, have had no water to give her unfortunate guest, so that possibly we may acquit her of astute contrivance in this particular. Her craft and falseness are bad enough without any aggravation; glorious, perhaps, in the eyes of a contemporary like Deborah, with elementary ideas of right and wrong, and lauded by the black-eyed women of the tents, who were only rough Arabs of more than 3,000 years ago, but very far from the morality of the New Testament. "The principal things for the whole use of man's life," says the Son of Sirach, "are water, fire, iron, and salt, flour of wheat, honey, milk, the blood of the grape, and oil, and clothing;"[2] so that flour, honey, milk, and oil embraced all the solid food of his Hebrew fellow-countrymen in this wonderfully wise writer's day. Flesh is not even mentioned, nor are vegetables. That the Land should be so often glorified as "flowing with milk and honey" implies the same notions of living.[3]

[1] Neil, *Palestine Explored*, p. 12.

[2] Ecclus. xxxix. 26, written about B.C. 199. Riehm, p. 726.

[3] Ex. iii. 8, 17; xiii. 5; xxxiii. 3; Cant. iv. 11; v. 1; Joel iii. 18; Num. xiii. 27; xiv. 8; xvi. 13, 14; Deut. vi. 3; xi. 9; xxvi. 15; xxvii. 3 xxxi. 20; Josh. v. 6; Jer. xi. 5; xxxii. 22; Ezek. xx. 6, 15.

As it cannot be doubted that milk-farming is conducted still in the same way as for thousands of years past, it is to be assumed that the Hebrews made not only different kinds of cheese, the skimmed and the rich, but also butter, though I hope they took more care in freeing it from hairs and other defilements than is usual with the peasants or Arabs of to-day. No churns, however, are employed, as our version would seem to imply,[1] where it speaks of the "churning of butter." The milk is merely shaken backwards and forwards in a goat-skin bottle hung between poles, or pressed to and fro, first in one direction and then in another, till the globules of fat are separated. The Bedouins make great use of the butter thus obtained, which is rather fat or oil in so warm a climate, pouring it over their bread, or dipping the bread in it.[2] Cheese, also, is made by them in large quantities, but it is very inferior; little more, in fact, than curdled milk. A quantity of sour milk, or "leben," is put in a goat-skin bottle, and shaken till the whey separates and can be poured out. Then more sour milk is added, and the shaking and emptying of the whey continue till cheese enough is provided. This, when afterwards dried in the sun, is much used to mix with water as a cooling and strengthening drink on journeys, or is put into flour to make cheesecakes, in which shape it is a very concentrated form of food, easily carried about.[3] Shaw tells us that in Barbary, "instead of rennet, especially in the summer season, they turn the milk with the flowers of the great-headed thistle, or wild artichoke, and putting the curds afterwards into small baskets made with rushes, or with

[1] Prov. xxx. 33.

[2] The two words in Hebrew for milk, "halab" and "hemah," often leave it doubtful whether sour milk, "leben," or sweet, is intended.

[3] Burckhardt, *Travels*, p. 697. Niebuhr, *Reisen*, ii. 373.

the dwarf palm, they bind them up close and press them. These cheeses are rarely above two or three pounds in weight, and in shape and size like our penny loaves."[1] May the ten cheeses carried by David to his brothers in Saul's camp have been of this kind?[2] In the unchanging East it is very probable. The making of butter among the Berbers may also help us to realise the mode used in Bible times, as it is identical[3] with the practice of the Arabs in Palestine at the present day.

At about five miles from Gaza we had to cross the torrent-bed known as Wady Ghuzzeh; a veritable dry river-bed, with banks cut deep through the sandy earth, and a broad level channel between. Quite dry when I rode my horse across it, no better illustration of "a deceitful brook" could be imagined, though Job's words more strictly mean, "My brethren have deceived me like a torrent-bed"—Expecting water I have found none; "as the rush of water in torrent-beds, their friendship has passed away."[4] It helped one also to understand the cry of the Psalmist: "Turn again," or rather, "Cause to return again our captivity, as streams of rushing water return to the dry beds of the wadys in the Negeb,"[5] the very region in which I was travelling. The country, without its people, was then like the wady as I saw it; would that they might return to it in tumultuous, multitudinous force, like the torrent that in winter would fill the wady in all its breadth!

We are apt to imagine that "wilderness" in the Bible is the same as desert, but it really means, even etymologically, only a region given up to wild creatures,[6] and

[1] Shaw, *Travels*, i. 308. The first edition was published in 1738, in folio.
[2] 1 Sam. xvii. 18
[3] Shaw, *Travels*, i. 308.
[4] Job vi. 15.
[5] Ps. cxxvi. 4.
[6] From A.-S. "wilder"—a wild animal.

although used by our translators as the equivalent of five different Hebrew words, it often stands rather for a pastoral region, such as the district from Gaza south, than for an arid waste. The fact is, all the open country of the plains, the Shephelah, or the Negeb, is pasture and wilderness by turn; spring covering it with thin grass and a bright tapestry of flowers, but the hot summer burning up one part after another, so that shepherds have ever to lead their flocks to new districts, the wonder being how, in some of these, the creatures find enough to keep them alive.[1] "The pastures of the wilderness,"[2] therefore, included such tracts as those through which I was passing; the very region in which Isaac spent his long shepherd life; flocks of sheep and goats and herds of cattle on every slope showing how rich it is in spring, though in the hot months the Arab tents would be moved to other parts of the country, where, from experience, it was known that herbage would be longer green.

It was delightful to ride on through the fresh air, with the boundless horizon all to one's self but for a stray human figure or a small Arab encampment. I had admirable opportunities for studying the shepherd of Isaac's district, and he certainly was not very poetical. One ragged Arab in an "abba," tending some sheep and goats, told us how one of the latter had been stolen from him by a man of another tribe; how he had traced it, and got back, not only the goat, but its worth in money. But this did not content him, for revenge is sweet even in the wilderness of Gerar. He was on the look-out for a horse or camel of the offending tribesman, or of one of his encampment, and when he found one he would steal it! Another

[1] "Midbar," the usual word for wilderness available for pasture, comes from a root, "to drive"—that is, to drive flocks or herds.

[2] Ps. lxv. 12; Joel ii 22.

shepherd, armed with two pistols and a long-barrelled gun, stood playing on a reed pipe to a large flock of sheep and goats, which followed the music as he stalked slowly on before. It may have been that the simple reed pipe—one or two lengths of thick reed, pierced with holes, and closed at the top by a piece of smaller diameter, one side of which was cut through to cause vibration—was "the organ" invented by Jubal,[1] but, if so, it had remained exceedingly primitive. Its compass was only a few changes in a higher or deeper drone, simply distressing to unaccustomed ears. It was clearly, however, a delight to the sons of the desert,[2] and formed in ancient times, with the harp[3] and timbrel,[4] the music of the dance before the tents, when the herds and flocks had come home, or of shepherds amusing themselves on the pastures. Each sex, it must be understood, still dances alone. To see the sheep following the shepherd brought back to one's mind the words of our Lord, especially when I found that the he-goat, or ram, which led the flock, and some others that followed the shepherd closely, had a name to which they answered when called by him: "The sheep hear his voice, and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out."[5] As there are no fences, and many flocks, it is necessary that each flock should learn to follow its own shepherd; nor must it wander off to the open patches of wheat or barley, as it would if not thus trained. To go astray in the open plain brings danger, for a lost sheep is a ready prey to some chance wild beast from the mountains. But if it be lost in the desolate hills its destruction is almost certain if it be not found again, for there wolves and jackals abound, while leopards still prowl in the hills of Gilead, in those round the Dead Sea, and about Carmel and the hills of Galilee.

[1] Gen. iv. 21. [2] Job xxi. 12. [3] 1 Sam. xvi. 16.
[4] Job xxi. 12. [5] John x. 3.

Anciently indeed these fierce creatures seem to have been numerous, for we read of a town called Beth Nimra, "the House of the Leopard,"[1] and the stream that runs past it is to this day called "Nahr Nimrin," "the River of the Leopards." There was another, Nimrin, "the Leopards," in Moab,[2] while Canticles speaks of "the Mountains of the Leopard,"[3] and we find a place called "Nimeirah" at the south of the Dead Sea. If the shepherd sees a sheep or goat wandering, he calls it back; but should it still keep on its course, he hurls a stone from his sling, so as to fall just beyond it and frighten it back to the flock.

The fidelity of Eastern shepherds to their flocks is proverbial. Not a few manage to obtain an old long-barrelled gun, or a pistol, especially in districts exposed to the Bedouins, as for instance to the south of Gaza; but most of them have, in addition, a strong oaken club or bludgeon, two feet or more in length, its round or oblong head stuck full of heavy iron nails: a terrible weapon in the hands of a strong, brave man. A loop at the handle serves to hang it to the "leathern girdle"[4] universally worn by peasants and the humbler classes, to bind together the unbleached cotton shirt which is their whole dress by day. When it is passed over the wrist, this loop is also a security that the weapon shall not be lost, even if knocked out of the hand in a struggle. I was struck, when encamped on the Hill of Samaria, with the dangerous look of this club. The people around bear an indifferent name, so that watchmen had been appointed, without my knowledge, to protect the tent. That two peasants should be prowling around it in the darkness seemed awkward. Why were they doing so? To settle the matter I rose and went out in the dark to

[1] Num. xxxii. 3, 36. The same as Bethabara, "the House of the Ford," where John baptized. Nimrin also means "Clear Waters."

[2] Isa. xv. 6; Jer. xlviii. 34. [3] Cant. iv. 8. [4] Matt. iii. 4; Mark i. 6.

the nearer of the two. In a moment, pushing aside his "abba," his presence was explained by the production of a bludgeon with a head as large as a melon, and rough with iron — a common shepherd's club extemporised into a policeman's bâton! He pointed to it and to the houses near, and I at once understood his office. On the lonely unfenced hills and stony mountains, the danger that wild beasts will attack the flock is always sufficient to make a careful guard necessary. The yell of the hyena and the shriek of the jackal may, even at this day, be heard close to Jerusalem, and venomous snakes are common in the hot season. The limestone rocks and chalky hills afford the serpent tribe the very haunts they love, and in summer they become very dangerous. The deadly cobra—perhaps the "asp" of the Bible; the viper in two varieties, and six other poisonous snakes, are more or less common; one of them, the horned snake, only twelve or eighteen inches long, being so deadly that a man bitten by it dies in half an hour. Besides these, the shepherd has to guard against huge birds of prey, which swoop down on a stray kid or lamb, and need all the vigour of the shepherd to beat them off. But none of these foes terrify the brave protector of the flock, who, if it be small, is generally its owner, or one of the family,—for though "hirelings" are necessary when flocks are large, they cannot always be trusted. "He that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep."[1] "But the good shepherd knows his sheep, and is known by them, and is willing to lay down his life for his sheep."[2] There are no lions in Palestine now, and bears are only seen in the upper gorges of Lebanon, but the shepherds of to-day are often as manly

[1] John x. 12 [2] John x. 14, 15.

and faithful as David, long ago, when he went out, single-handed, at one time after a lion, and at another after a bear, and delivered the lambs out of their mouths, catching the lion by the beard when it turned on him, and smiting and slaying it.[1] "The Arabs," says Thevenot, "fear a lion so little that they often pursue him with only a club in their hand, and kill him."[2]

But wild beasts are not the only danger to a flock. The hills abound in caves and hiding-places which are often the resort of robbers, and the wandering Bedouins, in their black tents, are always ready to steal goats, sheep, or cattle when opportunity offers. In a country so thinly populated, moreover, the shepherd often can only trust to his single-handed bravery to defend his charge if the thief approach. Indeed, it is necessary in some parts still to pay blackmail to the roving Arabs to keep them from driving off herds and flocks alike. It is so round Kerak, in Moab, the sheepmasters of which give so much a year to the Bedouin sheikhs as a security that these hereditary thieves will not harry the folds: a state of things exactly like that of which David speaks when he reproaches Nabal at Carmel, in the Negeb, for refusing his followers food and refreshment. "I have heard," says he, "that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds who were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them all the while they were in Carmel."[3] Not to have attacked the shepherds and carried off their sheep was held to entitle the Adullam band that followed David to a liberal recompense. There was, however a better ground for claiming bounty, for the sturdy claimants had, besides, been "a wall to Nabal's men, both by night and day,"

[1] 1 Sam. xvii. 35.

[2] Rosenmüller, *A. u. N. Morgenland*, iii. 45, where various cases of like bravery are given.

[3] 1 Sam. xxv. 7.

protecting them from attack by other bands.[1] Shepherds, even now, tell similar tales of their encounters with beasts or with robbers, or of their protection by friendly encampments, as their predecessors did thousands of years ago. I heard of a case which happened only a short time since, where a poor fellow defended his flock so valiantly against several Bedouin robbers that he died of his wounds in the midst of his sheep. The good shepherd still "giveth his life for the sheep."[2]

Shepherds often, like Jacob, or like the shepherds of Bethlehem, abide in the field, or open country, keeping watch over their flock by night;[3] the parching drought consuming them by day and the frost by night.[4] In the early spring, the best pasturage is on the sea-coast plains; but as the heat increases, the flocks, as I have said, are driven higher and higher, till the hot summer finds them on the tops of the mountains. When no sheep-fold is near, a ring of thorny bushes is heaped up, but the wolf, after all, may leap into the guarded circle, though the dogs of the flock be watching outside. On the lowland plains the ruins of ancient towns and cities supply stones for permanent folds, the walls of which are often protected by a ring of thorns laid above them. A slight shelter near at hand is frequently all the protection through the night for their guardians; indeed, in the highest ridges of Lebanon, far above human habitations, they often have to content themselves with the shelter of some slight bend in the ground, setting stones round it, and strewing rushes within, for a bed. A fire kindled in the centre, so that they can lie with their feet to it, is their only comfort, and their furniture consists of nothing more than a few pots and pans, some sheep-skins and old rugs, under charge of faithful dogs during the day, when the

[1] 1 Sam. xxv. 15, 16. [2] John x. 11. [3] Luke ii. 8. [4] Gen. xxxi. 40.

shepherds are, perhaps, miles away. In the south, they often sleep in the open air throughout the year.

With the dawn of day the shepherds wake, and each of them "putteth forth" his own sheep, counting them as he lets them pass slowly out under his rod, through the one doorway. To help him in doing so "he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out,"[1] for flocks of different shepherds may have rested through the night in the same fold. Unlike the thief or robber, who stealthily climbs the wall, he goes in through the door to bring out his flock; the shepherd who for the time is acting as gate-keeper gladly opening to him as he approaches. Once outside, he begins his daily march at the head of his goats and sheep, the old he-goats and rams, which, often decked with bells, lead the rest, keeping close behind him, like so many dogs. It is one of the amusements of his monotonous day to play with them at times, for they are his only companions. Pretending to run away, he will soon be overtaken and surrounded by the sheep; setting out to climb the rocks, he is presently followed by the goats, and at last, when he rests, all the flock—goats and sheep alike—circle round him, gambolling in delight. Such a picture enables us to read with fresh joy how Jehovah leads His people like a flock, for so He led them once "by the hand of Moses and Aaron."[2] In the hill-country—and most of Palestine is hilly—the natural caves of the rocks, once the dwellings of the ancient Horites, are the common folds, as they were in the old days when Saul, in pursuing David, "came to the sheepcotes by the way, where was a cave."[3] Across the Jordan, on the other hand, where caves are not to be had, Reuben determined to "build sheepfolds for their cattle."[4]

[1] John x. 3.
[2] Ps. lxxvii. 20; lxxx. 1.
[3] 1 Sam. xxiv. 3.
[4] Num. xxxii. 16.

In the mountains, cleft as they often are by narrow, impassable ravines, a sheep may easily wander too near the edge, and be in danger of falling into the gloomy depth below. Dr. Duff noticed an interesting incident associated with such a scene. "When on a narrow bridle-path," says he, "cut out on the face of a precipitous ridge, I observed a native shepherd with his flock, which, as usual, followed him. He frequently stopped and looked back; and if he saw a sheep creeping up too far, or coming too near the edge, would go back, and, putting the crook round one of its hind legs, would gently pull it to him." [1] This is the shepherd's staff; sometimes bent, thus, into a crook, but more commonly a long, stout, straight oak stick, often cased at its lower end in iron, to beat off the thief or wild beast. This staff to help and the club to protect are the staff and the rod with which God comforts His people.[2]

In lambing-time the greatest care of his flock is taken by the shepherd. The ewes are driven slowly, to prevent their being injured,[3] and you will often see the shepherd carrying a lamb under his arm, and others in the bosom of his cotton shirt, the girdle making a pocket of it; just as Highland shepherds carry helpless lambs in the folds of their plaids. So the prophet pictures the Messiah: "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." [4] As the shepherd does so, he often calls them, if necessary; but, indeed, they know him so well that they commonly follow close behind of their own accord. It would be idle, however, for one unknown to them to take the shepherd's place: "A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from

[1] *Life of Dr. Duff*, ii. 165.
[2] Ps. xxiii. 4.
[3] Gen. xxxiii. 13.
[4] Isa. xl. 11.

him: for they know not the voice of strangers."[1] Anyone who visits Palestine may readily find with what truth this picture is painted.

It is common to see a shepherd followed by separate flocks, one of goats and the other of sheep, which he has divided one from another to lead them to some part where each will find the pasture it prefers. The goat thrives best on rocky slopes, and is so fond of young leaves that he seeks them above all things, sometimes even managing to get up into a tree to obtain them, whereas sheep prefer the fresh grass of the plains or mountains. Hence the west side of Palestine, from Hebron to Hermon, with its bushy and grassless hills, is specially suited for the goat, while the eastern table-land, beyond the Jordan, destitute of trees or underwood, but rich in short grass and herbs, is the paradise of sheep; as the coast-plains of Sharon and Philistia, dotted with spots in which the grass is specially strong and full of sap, have, in all ages, been specially adapted for cattle.[2] But there are many parts where both sheep and goats can be pastured by the same shepherd, so that it is not uncommon to see a flock of black goats feeding in the open scrub, while a flock of white sheep nibble the grass a little way off; the shepherd standing midway between the two to watch both. I could never witness this without thinking how our Lord must have taken note of it in His journeys, as is shown in His awful words respecting the goats being set on the left hand, and the sheep on the right, at the Great Day.[3]

Goats feed all day long, seldom thinking of the heat or seeking shade, and are led into the fold at night, to be brought out again in the morning. It is only in the cool months, on the contrary, that sheep feed through the day.

[1] John x. 5. [2] 2 Kings iii. 4; 2 Chron. xxvi. 10.
[3] Matt. xxv. 32, 33.

In the greater part of the year they are led out to pasture only towards sunset, returning home in the morning, or if they be led out in the morning they lie during the hot hours in the shade of some tree or rock, or in the rude shelter of bushes prepared for them.[1] They are taken into the warmth of caves or under other cover during the coldest part of winter; the lambs are born between January and the beginning of March, and need to be kept with the ewes in the field, that the mothers may get nutriment enough to support the poor weak creatures, which cannot be taken to and from the pasturage, but must remain on it. That many of them die is inevitable, in spite of the shepherd's utmost care, for snow and frost on the uplands, and heavy rain on the plains, are very fatal to them. Nor is their guardian less to be pitied. He cannot leave them, day or night, and often has no shelter. At times, when on his weary watch, he may be able to gather branches enough to make a comparatively dry spot on which to stand in the wild weather, but this is not always the case. I have heard of the skin peeling completely from a poor man's feet, from continued exposure. By night, as we have seen, he has often, in outlying places, to sleep on whatever brush he may gather; his sheep-skin coat, or an old rug or coverlet, his only protection. Perhaps it fared thus with the shepherds of Bethlehem, eighteen hundred years ago, when they were "abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night."[2]

It is at this season, moreover, amidst the storms and rains of winter, that the jackal and the wolf are specially alert, as in old times was the lion, which came up from the thickets of Jordan. The shepherd may have found shelter in some rude mud cabin; his sheep feeding outside, the bells on the necks of their leaders tinkling as they

[1] Cant. i. 7. [2] Luke ii. 8—12.

do so. The dogs, drenched and sleepy, seek the shelter of any bush or tree. Thick darkness rests around. Sleep above all things is needed by the shepherd, but he dares not rest.[1] From time to time he anxiously shouts to the dogs, to keep them awake. A rush of sheep takes place; the dogs give angry voice; it may be the wolf. The shepherd is at once out to call back his flock, and to drive off the wild beast, if the alarm has been well founded. The good shepherd has no thought for himself, but only for his trust. In Bible ages towers were often built in the centre of the fold, when it was large, so that the shepherds might offer a better defence, when their flocks were around them, within the guardian wall,[2] and in this case of course they were protected, more or less, from the weather; but few could have been thus fortunate.

Yet there is a bright as well as a dark side to the shepherd's life. No occupation could be more delightful to the simple mind to which the flock is the chief concern in the universe, than when he leads forth his sheep or goats to green pastures, and beside still waters as they glide over the stones in some still-flowing brook.[3] The patient sheep follow meekly; even among the lively goats some do so, and the rest follow them. His charge once busy feeding, the shepherd can take his pipe and play artless melodies, or cheer himself by his simple songs. In the rare case of genius, the glory of the morning or evening may wake higher aspirations, as it once did in the soul of David, calling forth some of his wondrous Psalms, first sung to his own accompaniment on the harp which he had himself invented.[4] In the burning heat of noon,

[1] Nah. iii. 18.

[2] Isa. i. 8: "a besieged city" is translated by Hitzig, "a shepherd's watch-tower." Gen. xxxv. 21: "the tower of Edar" means "a shepherd's tower." See also 2 Kings xvii. 9; xviii. 8; 2 Chron. xxvi. 10.

[3] Ps. xxiii. 2. [4] Ps. xxxiii. 2; 1 Sam. xvi. 18; Amos vi. 5.

on the treeless plain or hill-side,[1] the shepherd leads the sheep to the shadow of some great rock in the weary land, as I have often seen; the panting creatures pressing close to the cold stone, alike for deeper shadow and to feel its natural coolness.[2] Often, indeed, in these overpowering hours, I have noticed them crowding into the open caves which abound everywhere in the chalky hills. When evening falls they follow their guide to the nearest well, if there be no running water—not unfrequently to find other flocks before them. In such a case strife as to priority often arises, in a land where water is so scarce; as in the old days with the "herdmen of Abram's cattle" and those of the cattle of Lot,[3] or with the Philistine herdsmen of Gerar and those of Isaac.[4] Sometimes the deep wells are covered by a great stone, so heavy that it can only be moved by the joint strength of several men; thus securing the water against the selfishness of any single shepherd, and forcing him to wait till his brethren who have an equal right to it have arrived.[5] If it be the season for leading them to the fold by night, the sheep are guided thither as evening falls, the shepherd standing at the rude gate with outstretched staff, counting them on entering, as in the morning.[6] Then comes the watch by night, till the next morning brings back the same daily occupation.

An Eastern shepherd is responsible for every mishap to his flock, but this responsibility is lightened by the fact that his wages generally depend on its prosperity, being paid by a share of the young lambs, or of the wool, or of both. Apart from the natural sympathy with the only living creatures linked to him by daily companionship, self-interest

[1] Gen. xxxi. 40.
[2] Isa. xxxii. 2; xxv. 4; xlix. 2; Ps. xci. 1.
[3] Gen. xiii. 7.
[4] Gen. xxvi. 20.
[5] Gen. xxix. 2, 3.
[6] Lev. xxvii. 32. Knobel.

thus prompts him to unwearying care and brave fidelity in his calling. He will wander for hours after a sheep that has strayed into some waterless hollow in the wilderness, or some gloomy and desolate ravine in the mountains, and when he has found it, will bear the exhausted creature home on his shoulders, rejoicing that it is restored to the flock: a type, as our Saviour tells us, of heavenly love, seeking and saving the human soul.[1] Pity, however, might well be mingled with more common elements in the shepherd, for in old times, as now, the judge might sentence him to make good to his master that which was lost, though by the law of Moses he was not held responsible for sheep destroyed by wild beasts, if he produced some fragment to show that they really had been so destroyed.[2] Yet Jacob had to make good to his covetous uncle, Laban, "the white" Syrian, even such of the flock as beasts of prey had killed.[3] It should be added that along with conscientious shepherds, there have doubtless been some, in all ages, as in the days of Ezekiel and Zechariah, who "ate the milk and butter, and clothed themselves with the wool; who killed the fatted sheep, and did not feed the flock, or strengthen the weak, or heal the sick, or bind up the injured, or lead back the strayed, or seek the lost."[4]

At the best, the calling of the shepherd is a poor one. It required a service of twenty-one years, and all his special astuteness, to give Jacob independence. In a time of famine the prodigal son could only obtain for himself the dry pods of the carob, lying below the tree, the food of the swine he was tending.[5] Amos added to his shepherding the piercing of sycamore figs, to increase his

[1] Luke xv. 4. [2] Ex. xxii. 9—13. [3] Gen. xxxi. 39.
[4] Ezek. xxxiv. 3, 4; Zech. xi. 16. See Geikie's *Hours with the Bible*, vi. 218, for translation of the passages.
[5] Luke xv. 16.

wages, that he might live.[1] The share in the flock allowed as the reward of the herdsman is small, though years may increase it to a flock of his own. Meanwhile he has milk from the goats for his maintenance, and a sheep-skin or two from which to make a coat against the winter's cold, and slowly toils through long poverty to what is to him independence. Few, we may rest assured, have Jacob's wit or opportunity to gain flocks and herds by increasing the number of the spotted and speckled.[2] Still, to tend sheep has always been honourable in a country like Palestine, so that, to-day, we see the daughters of a sheikh, or of the foremost men of a tribe, thinking the work worthy of them, as Rachel did long ago in Haran, and Moses in Midian.[3] There is indeed, in the East, such a sense of the dignity of manhood in itself, apart from all accidents of birth or position, that any calling not obviously dishonourable is dignified by becoming a human vocation. The poorest beggar has a quiet self-respect which commands respect from others.

The sheep of Palestine are longer in the head than ours, and have tails from five inches broad at the narrowest part, to fifteen inches at the widest, the weight being in proportion, and ranging generally from ten to fourteen pounds,[4] but sometimes extending to thirty pounds.[5] The tails are, in fact, huge masses of fat, for which, in some parts, small carts are said to be used, tied behind the animal.[6] Dr. van Lennep, however, ridicules this, though he tells us that the tail, "though usually not more than twenty pounds in weight, is not unfrequently three and even four times as heavy"![7] This is on a par with the

[1] Amos vii. 14. [2] Gen. xxx. 32.
[3] Gen. xxix. 9; Ex. iii. 1; ii. 16.
[4] Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 144. [5] Riehm, p. 1384.
[6] Rosenmüller, *Bib. Naturgeschichte*, pt. ii. 76. See also Herod., iii. 113.
[7] *Bible Lands*, p. 196.

statement of Herodotus, that the tail is three cubits—or four feet and a half—long. Instead of this, it simply reaches to the knees or a little below them, standing out as a great broad mass, its tip coming to a point turned slightly out. This amazing appendage is used as grease, and also for lamps and cooking; the Arabs even eating it as a delicacy, when fried in slices, though it tastes much like fried tallow. With such a tail it is no wonder that the rest of the carcass weighs only from sixty to seventy pounds. The rams alone have horns; the colour of the breed is white, but some have brown faces.

The portion of the Holy Land once held by Israel is not rich in pasture suited for cattle, so that it could never have supported great herds. But its dry, chalky soil, growing sparse aromatic plants and salt-containing herbs, its stunted brush, and stretches of light hill-grasses, offered abundant food for sheep and goats. The extent to which these characteristics of their country were utilised by the Hebrews, and the importance of the part which sheep and goats fill in their history, may be judged from the fact that they are mentioned in the Bible more than 500 times. Sheep always come first in the statement of the wealth of the patriarchs,[1] as they do also in the case of Job.[2] Nabal's flocks in Carmel, south of Judæa, consisted of 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats.[3] David's flocks were so large that it was necessary for him to have a special overseer of his shepherds;[4] and Hezekiah thought it worth while to provide "cotes" for his sheep and goats on a royal scale.[5] Solomon offered 120,000 sheep at the dedication of the Temple, and required 36,500 a year for his table;[6] and many thousand sheep are recorded to have

[1] Gen. xxvi. 14; xxxiii. 13.
[2] Job i. 3; xlii. 12.
[3] 1 Sam. xxv. 2.
[4] 1 Chron. xxvii. 31.
[5] 2 Chron. xxxii. 28.
[6] 1 Kings iv. 23; viii. 63; 2 Chron. vii. 5.

been offered as sacrifices on one occasion by various Jewish kings.[1]

But if the Jewish mountains and plains, and the uplands of the Negeb, were thus dotted with flocks, the number of sheep and goats reared in the districts east of the Jordan was much greater, from the smallness of the population in proportion to the extent and richness of the pasturage. Job, in the Haurân, had latterly 14,000 sheep; and King Mesha, of Moab, was laid under a tribute to Ahab of 100,000 lambs a year, and the wool of 100,000 rams.[2] But the wandering Arabs, in those days, were specially wealthy in flocks, rivalling the great sheep-masters of Australia, where, thirty years ago, there were already 16,000,000 sheep.[3] The Israelites, under Moses, we are told, carried off from the Midianites 675,000 sheep,[4] and the tribe of Reuben swept away from the "Hagarites" 250,000.[5] The flocks of Kedar—a wandering tribe of Arabs in Northern Arabia—and the rams of Nebaioth, another great Arab tribe, are noted by Isaiah;[6] the former specially supplying the vast demand of Tyre for "lambs, and rams and goats,"[7] while Damascus was its great market for white wool.[8] That these numbers and statements are by no means exaggerated is strangely corroborated by the Assyrian inscriptions, which often give quite as great numbers of sheep as being carried off from conquered peoples. Indeed, they are sometimes greater, for Sennacherib informs us, in a cylinder discovered in Nineveh, that in the war with Merodach Baladan he carried off, from Babylonian and Syrian tribes, no fewer than 800,600 sheep and goats.[9]

[1] 2 Chron. xv. 11; xxx. 24.
[2] Job xlii. 12; 2 Kings iii. 4.
[3] *Chambers' Encycl.*: art. "Australia."
[4] Num. xxxi. 32.
[5] 1 Chron. v. 21.
[6] Isa. lx. 7.
[7] Ezek. xxvii. 21.
[8] Ezek. xxvii. 18.
[9] Schrader, *A. T. Keilinschriften*, p. 221.

It may be a wonder with some, as it used to be with myself, how such enormous sacrifices of sheep as the Bible records could have been burnt on any number of altars. If we turn, however, to the Law, we shall find that only the internal and external fat, the rump or great tail, the kidneys, and the "caul that is above the liver," were actually consumed; the animal as a whole being reserved as food for the priests and the officers,[1] as we see in the case of the Passover lambs.

Flocks of goats are very numerous in Palestine at this day, as they were in former ages. We see them everywhere on the mountains, in smaller or larger numbers;[2] at times, also, along with sheep, as one flock, in which case it is usually a he-goat that is the special leader of the whole,[3] walking before it as gravely as a sexton before the white flock of a church choir. It is from this custom that Isaiah speaks of kings as the "he-goats of the earth;"[4] a name applied to them by Zechariah also,[5] and to Alexander the Great by Daniel, who describes him as a he-goat from the west, with a notable horn between his eyes:[6] a fitting symbol of his irresistible power at the head of the Macedonian army. The quarrelsomeness of the he-goats, often shown in violence towards the patient sheep, supplied, further, an apt symbol of a cruel and oppressive prince,[7] and as these characteristics made it necessary for the shepherd to separate the goats from the sheep in the fold, this may have been the immediate source of the awful picture in our Lord's discourse, of the separation of the goats from the sheep at the Judgment-day.[8] The usual colour of the goat in Palestine is black, so that the comparison in

[1] Lev. vii. 3—6.
[2] 1 Kings xx. 27; Cant. iv. 1; vi. 5.
[3] Jer. l. 8; Prov. xxx. 31.
[4] Isa xiv. 9, "chief ones" = he-goats.
[5] Zech. x. 3.
[6] Dan. viii. 5.
[7] Ezek. xxxiv. 17.
[8] Matt. xxv. 32.

Canticles of the locks of the Beloved, hanging in rich abundance over her shoulders, to a flock of long-haired goats, feeding on the slopes of the Gilead hills, one above the other, was as natural to a poet of the country as it is beautiful. The Beloved herself, exposed to the scorching heat, in the vineyards of which her brothers had made her keeper, says, as she thinks of her complexion, burnt black "because the sun hath looked upon her," that she is like the tents of Kedar, "beautiful" in their outline as an encampment, though the tent-coverings, woven of goats' hair, were black, like her own sun-tanned features.[1] One specially useful purpose once served by goats' hair is told us in David's history, when his wife Michal took one of the household images, or teraphim, and having duly laid it on a bed, under the bed-clothes, put on its head an extemporised wig of goats' hair, no doubt like his own in colour, so that the counterfeit passed off as the young hero himself, and saved him from the emissaries of Saul, to bless the Church with his glorious Psalms.[2] It must, however, have been the hair of a reddish-brown goat, not of a black one, that Michal used, as David had auburn hair.[3] There is a kind of goat with such brownish-red hair, and there are also goats pied and speckled, like those which Jacob had for his share, though the black ones greatly predominate.

Goats were in much demand among the Hebrews as offerings; a kid eight days old being fit for this use, though the Passover goat, when a lamb was not used, was required to be a yearling.[4] The thrice-repeated command that a kid should not be "seethed [or cooked] in

[1] Cant. i. 5.
[2] 1 Sam. xix. 13—16.
[3] 1 Sam. xvi. 12; xvii. 42, "ruddy" = red-haired.
[4] Lev. xxii. 27; Judg. vi. 19; xiii. 15, 19; Ex. xii. 5.

his mother's milk,"[1] may have been given, in part, as a protest against the seeming cruelty of using the milk that should have been the creature's nourishment, as the medium of its preparation for human food; but there were other and deeper grounds. Like all the Mosaic rules about food, it doubtless had a religious basis; perhaps to guard the Hebrews against a practice associated with some heathen superstition prevalent around them. Jewish tradition, reaching back to hoary antiquity, seems to justify this belief, kids being said to have been seethed by the heathen in their mothers' milk, at the fruit harvest, in order to get a blessing on the crop or on the fields over which the milk was sprinkled.[2]

[1] Ex. xxiii. 19; xxxiv. 26; Deut. xiv. 21.
[2] Riehm, *Speisegesetze*, p. 1515.

CHAPTER XI.

GERAR.

The country, as we walked our horses towards Gerar, continued to be a succession of rolling pasture-land, seamed with dry water-courses, some small, others showing that large streams rushed through them in winter. At various points Bedouin tents of black goats'-hair cloth came in view, with herds of fifty or sixty small cattle feeding on the slopes; women, men, or boys tending them. The grass was very thin, and greatly broken by tufts of lily-like plants, not yet come to flower; scarlet anemones shining out between. At last we reached the district in which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had pitched their tents and dug wells for their flocks, nearly 4,000 years ago. A well on a sandy slope, close by the track, was the first of many which we soon passed, indicating the once comparative populousness of the neighbourhood. It was circular, with a domed roof, partly broken in, and this well, like most others, had long ago been filled up. Some of those near at hand were, like this one, filled up nearly to the top; a few, entirely; but others had been left twelve or twenty feet deep, with the rock exposed below the masonry. This first well was built of small stones set in mortar, which was bound with masses of small shells, like that of the walls of Ascalon. Each layer of stones formed a level circle round the whole wall, as seen on the outside; for the inside was cemented, and the stones hidden. Two of the wells were quite close on the knoll behind; others,

scattered over the gentle slope which ran back a long way to the east, with low hills behind it. One, which was about twenty feet across, built, like the others, of small stones in regular layers, cemented over inside, with a broken dome above it, had water at a depth of about sixty feet, but how deep the water was I could not say. A heap of stones lay at one side; mostly shelly limestone and rough sandstone. In all, I counted about twenty wells, of which eighteen were more or less filled up, only the masonry of the other two being perfect. They stand on the hill-slopes that run down to the wady. The perfect domes had a hole in the centre, to let the drawers get at the water. The reason most of them had been more or less filled up when the population diminished was, apparently, that they might serve as grain-pits for the Bedouin, and it was possibly by them that they had been cemented, since fragments of pottery in the concrete showed it to be comparatively modern. Were these the wells dug by the slaves of Abraham and "stopped and filled with earth" by the subjects of Abimelech, the Philistine, and which Isaac cleared out again?[1] Or were they some of those which Isaac caused to be dug on the slopes of the Wady Ghuzzeh,[2] piercing through the upper porous limestone to the impervious strata below, over which streams of water flow, all the year, from the mountains and uplands behind, giving a constant abundance of "springing" or "living" water? On the great map issued by the Palestine Survey, twenty-four wells are marked within a circle of two miles, nearly all close to the great Wady Ghuzzeh, or to a subordinate torrent-bed called Es Sheriah, which runs into it. The Wady Ghuzzeh drains the whole country in the rainy season for more than thirty miles beyond Beersheba, its course running, below

[1] Gen. xxvi. 15, 18. Possibly they were even originally grain pits.
[2] Gen. xxvi. 19.

the uplands, in a curve from east to west, towards that site, and great wadys opening into it from the hills to the east. One of these, Wady es Sheriah, indeed, runs back at least eighteen miles from its junction with the Wady Ghuzzeh. The spot particularly known as "the Ruins of Gerar" has about a dozen cisterns on the top of a low swell; their breadth from four to five feet, and their depth, where not filled up, six or eight feet, so that while some of the wells in the neighbourhood are very large, two-thirds of the whole number are but small. Near one of the smaller size are the remains of a drinking-trough, into which, it may be, Isaac and Jacob often poured water for their sheep and goats.

That a considerable community existed here in antiquity is beyond question, from the evidence of heaps of broken pottery, found in the sides of the valley to the depth of from six to ten feet, besides much strewn about over the surface of the whole region. Unlike that which is made now at Gaza, it is red, not black; so that it may well be very old. Such beds of potsherds can only be accounted for by the presence of large numbers of households for long periods; nor would even this be sufficient explanation unless we remembered what I have already alluded to—the exceeding fragility of Eastern pottery. Only too often for the poor maiden's peace of mind, the pitcher taken to the fountain breaks into pieces[1] if set down without special care, while, on opening my carefully-packed box after reaching England, a thousand fragments were nearly all that remained of the specimens I tried to bring home. The cement with which cisterns are coated in Palestine, to make them water-tight, utilises part of this wreck of shivered earthenware, so wonderfully common everywhere, but vast beds have been left untouched

[1] Eccles. xii. 6.

at Gerar, perhaps for future consumption. In the deep valley of Hinnom, west and south of Jerusalem, men may be seen every autumn preparing this material. Gathering a heap of potsherds of all sizes and kinds, the cement or "homrah" maker tucks up his blue cotton overshirt below his girdle, and sits down on the ground, with a heavy, round stone, for crushing the broken ware, beside him. Spreading out a small quantity, he rolls the stone over it till the whole is ground to powder, or to very small pieces, and this, mixed with lime, makes the cement. At Jerusalem, traces of an ancient gateway have been discovered, apparently that known in Bible times as "the Gate of the Potters:"[1] the quarter where earthenware was manufactured.[2] Thither Jeremiah was commanded to go and buy "a potter's earthen bottle," and shiver it to pieces before "the elders of the people and the elders of the priests," as a symbol of the utter destruction impending over the city, for its wickedness. Just below the gate thus visited to reach the potters' quarters, there are great heaps of rubbish, made up chiefly of very ancient broken pottery, and it is here that the "homrah" makers obtain most of their raw material. It is striking to think that immediately opposite this former position of the "Potters' Gate" lies the "Potters' Field," still called Aceldama—"the Field of Blood"—one of the rare spots in this locality where the soil is of clay deep enough for graves, and for this reason used until very recently for the burial of strangers, as it had been from the time of Judas Iscariot.[3]

Gerar was one of the oldest cities of the Philistines, for it is mentioned in the table of nations, in the tenth chapter of Genesis:[4] the border town, it would seem, of that

[1] Not "potsherds," as in the R.V. The A.V. has "east gate," by a mistranslation. [2] Jer. xix. 1; xviii. 4.

[3] Acts i. 18; Matt. xxvii. 7. [4] Gen. x. 19, 26.

people on their first coming into Palestine from the south, but after a time left to sink into insignificance, when Gaza and the other Philistine towns were built, farther north. Abimelech, the name of its kings, both in Abraham's lifetime and in Isaac's, seems to have been a title given to its rulers, as Pharaoh was given to all Egyptian kings. We not only find it applied to the chiefs of Gerar at an interval of perhaps eighty years, in the narratives of Abraham and Isaac, but it is used also of King Achish of Gath.[1] It was to the treaty made by Abraham with the ruler thus distinguished, in his day,[2] that the Israelites throughout their history owed the recognition of their title to Beersheba, as being in their territory, of which, indeed, it formed the southern outpost. The Philistines must therefore have been supreme from Gerar to the limits of the desert, so that their territory extended in one direction, at least, over thirty miles, though only, for the most part, over pasture-land. That so powerful a chief should have treated Abraham as on an equal footing with himself, speaks of the strength of the patriarch's tribe. He was, in fact, a great emir.

I rested for some time in Gerar, taking my seat on a pile of stones beside a cistern, while we enjoyed some home-made brown bread, and hard eggs, washed down with a bottle of water. The scene reminded me of Salisbury Plain: flocks here and there; the country undulating; the chalky soil sprinkled, rather than covered, with grass. To the east the limestone cropped out here and there, as the land rose in long, round-topped waves towards the distant mountains. A good many cattle were grazing at different points, tended by Arab boys, with very Jewish faces, and by brown-skinned women, in blue, close-

[1] 1 Sam. xxi. 10 (see margin); title of Ps. xxxiv. (see margin).
[2] Gen. xxi. 22—32.

fitting cotton sacks; their faces veiled; their heads covered with the sleeves of their dress—apparently the only article they wore; not even their naked feet visible. Part of the land was rudely ploughed a few inches deep, but the rank thorns and weeds seemed calculated to choke the good seed.[1] Barley was growing in some places, and melons were being sown in others. Close beside me grew the familiar groundsel, dear to birds here, no doubt, as it is in beloved England! The sea, hidden from sight, lay six miles to the west. Our guide stood by, radiant in his many colours; his pistols shining in his girdle. "Were they loaded?" He flashed up at the question and fired one off, on the moment. Presently a red-and-white snake, perhaps roused by the noise, glided out from the stones on which we were sitting, and disappeared in the thorns near at hand. The shot fired had been the only one our son of Mars could boast. "Ah! had the other pistol been loaded, he would have killed the horrid creature!" I was only thankful it did not try to kill any of us, if it were poisonous.

Serpents are very numerous in Palestine, many kinds remaining undescribed, although over twenty species are already known. Indeed the unknown probably outnumber those with which European naturalists are acquainted. Nine kinds are more or less venomous; some of them, as I have said before, very deadly; yet few accidents seem to happen from them. What the reptile was that troubled us is a secret it kept to itself. Seven words are used for different kinds of snakes or serpents, but it is very hard to know what species is in each case meant. The difficulty of the English reader is increased by the same Hebrew word being differently translated in different passages: an error slavishly followed by the Revised Version.[2]

[1] Matt. xiii. 7.

[2] See פֶּתֶן Pethen.

The word for serpents generally occurs twenty-nine times in the Old Testament,[1] but the distinct members of the ghastly brood are contented with less publicity. Three appear only once; one, thrice; one, four times; and one, six times. Some of these cannot be identified, others can; let us see what light science throws on any of those which the Bible notices.

The word "cockatrice,"[2] used in the Authorised Version as the translation of two Hebrew words, is a mediæval name for a fabulous serpent, supposed to be produced from a *cock's* egg, but originally it was no more than a corruption of the word "crocodile;"[3] its sound leading to the wonderful invention. The serpent to which it refers is not known, but may be the great yellow viper, or "daboia,"[4] the largest of its kind, and more than usually dangerous, since it seeks its prey by night. The Revised Version, most unfortunately, gives as an alternative to "cockatrice," in the margin, the word "basilisk," which was another fabulous serpent, thus illuminating the one unscientific fable by a second quite as fanciful. The basilisk, or "king serpent," was described as only three spans long at the most, with a white spot on its head, frequently compared to a crown, whence its name. Fables abound of its fatal hiss, terrifying all other serpents; of its scorching the grass and stalks of herbs as it glided through them; of its splitting stones with its pestilent breath, and of its advancing upright: dreams which show how much the natural science of past ages owed to the imagination. The great yellow viper, which is, perhaps, the creature really meant when

[1] נָחָשׁ Nahash.

[2] צֶפַע Tsephah; צִפְעוֹנִי Tsiphoni. The R.V. follows the A.V. in the one case in which the second of these words is translated "adder;" in the other cases it gives "basilisk," for cockatrice.

[3] Skeat, *English Dictionary*. Müller, *Etymol. Sprachwörterbuch*.

[4] Prov. xxiii. 32; Isa. xi. 8; xiv. 29; lix. 5; Jer. viii. 17.

either of these two fabulous creatures is mentioned in Scripture, is very poisonous. Canon Tristram saw one spring at a quail which was feeding. The snake failed to do more than puncture it, in the slightest possible degree, in the flesh of one of its wings. But even this was enough. Having fluttered on a few yards, the bird fell to the ground in the agonies of death. It is to the bite of this creature that in Proverbs. is compared the deadly effect of strong drink; it is on its hole that the weaned child is to place its hand in the days of the Messiah; it is to its eggs, then believed to be deadly poison, that the wicked deeds of his contemporaries are compared by Isaiah; and its untameable fierceness is noticed by Jeremiah as defying the efforts of the charmer.

Four Hebrew words are translated "adder" in the Authorised Version, which is duly followed in its confusion by the Revisers: a course pardonable two hundred and fifty years ago, but preposterous now. Of these four words, one, "pethen," is four times rendered "asp," and twice "adder."[1] From the allusions to it, it is shown to be poisonous, to live in holes, and to defy the arts of the charmer to subdue it. Perhaps, however, this intractableness refers only to individual snakes, if it be correct that the Egyptian cobra, which is also found in Southern Palestine, is the serpent intended, as is believed by such authorities as Klein, Furrer, and Canon Tristram.[2] I have often seen them in the hands of serpent-charmers in Cairo, by whom they seem to be used, for their strange art, more than any other serpent. Taking them out of a basket, and laying them on the pavement, they speedily irritate them till they rise upright, supported by coils of

[1] Deut. xxxii. 33; Job xx. 14—16; Isa. xi. 8; Ps. lviii. 4, 5; xci. 13.

[2] Riehm, p. 1404. Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 271. Schenkel, *Bib. Lex.*, v. 223.

their lower vertebræ, and dilate their necks as if about to spring. Their tormentors then, catching hold of them, throw them round their arms, necks, or legs, and let them curl at their will; taking them off when they please.

References to serpent-charming are frequent in the Bible,[1] so that it must have been followed in Palestine, as it has been in Egypt, from the remotest ages to the present. The cobra, which is the asp of the Greeks and Romans, measures generally about a yard or four feet in length, though sometimes more. It is often represented in its erect posture on the Egyptian monuments, and a figure of it was worn on the diadem of the Pharaohs as the symbol of their absolute power of life and death. Serpent-charmers gain their livelihood in Egypt at this time, as of old, by luring serpents of different kinds from their holes in the mud walls of houses and other buildings. They belong to orders of dervishes, and thus link their art with religion, which may explain the severity expressed towards their class in the Old Testament, if its members joined their art with heathen, as its present professors do with Mahommedan, superstition. Manasseh is denounced for "using enchantments,"[2] which seem, from the Hebrew word, to have been a kind of divination by sorcerers from the hissing of serpents, and such enchantments are expressly prohibited in Leviticus and Deuteronomy.[3] They were, nevertheless, practised to the latest ages of the Jewish state, for Isaiah speaks of those skilled in enchanting by serpents,[4] and we find these reptiles spoken of in the New Testament as "tamed" or charmed.[5] When the effort of the charmer

[1] Ps. lviii. 5; Eccles. x. 11; Jer. viii. 17; Jas. iii. 7; Eccles. x. 8.

[2] 2 Kings xxi. 6; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6.

[3] Lev. xix. 26; Deut. xviii. 10.

[4] Isa. iii. 3. This is the real meaning of the words translated in the A.V. "the eloquent orator;" in the R.V., "the skilful enchanter." The meaning is, literally, "the skilful hisser."

[5] James iii. 7.

was unsuccessful, the serpent was said to be "deaf," and to "stop its ears,"[1] though, of course, it was not really insensible to sound, in any case. The charmers in Egypt now travel over every part of the land, and find abundant employment, though their remuneration is very small. They profess to be able to tell whether there are serpents in a house, without seeing them, and to attract them to their persons as a fowler, by the fascination of his voice, allures a bird into his net. Assuming an air of mystery, they strike the walls with a short palm-stick, whistle, make a clucking noise with their tongue, and spit on the ground, generally adding, "I adjure you by God, if ye be above, or if ye be below, that ye come forth; I adjure you by the most great name, if ye be obedient, that ye come forth; and if ye be disobedient, die! die! die!" The serpent is generally dislodged by the stick, or drops from the ceiling of the room, and is secured by the charmer, who extracts the poisonous teeth before venturing to toy with it.[2] Sometimes a flute is used to entice it from its hiding-place, and, when it is made harmless, to cause it to move to the music. Not unfrequently, as I have said, the performer lets the snakes twine round his neck, arms, and breast, and affects to be in a life-and-death struggle with them. In ancient times, moreover, charmers, apparently by pressing a particular part of the neck, were able to mesmerise, or temporarily paralyse them, so that they stretched themselves out at full length, and became for the time perfectly rigid; their activity being restored at pleasure by seizing them by the tail and rolling them briskly between the hands. Was this the way in which the skill of the Egyptian magicians was shown before Pharaoh?[3] It was, and still is, a dangerous art to trifle with creatures so deadly, for their poison-teeth grow again after being

[1] Ps. lviii. 4. [2] Lane, *Mod. Egypt.*, ii. 103. [3] Exod. vii. 9.

pulled out, and at times they strike before the teeth can be drawn, and the poor charmer dies. "Who will pity a charmer that is bitten with a serpent?" says the Son of Sirach. I do, for one! I, myself, never saw one of these poor creatures showing his art on any special scale, but a missionary in India gives us the following vivid personal testimony.[1] A serpent-charmer, having been sent into his garden, after the most minute and careful precautions against artifice of any kind—"began playing with his pipe, and after proceeding from one part of the garden to another for some minutes, stopped at a part of the wall much injured by age, and intimated that a serpent was within. He then played quicker, and louder, when, almost immediately, a large cobra put forth its hooded head, and the man ran fearlessly to the spot, seized it by the throat, and drew it out. He then showed the poison-fangs, and beat them out; afterwards taking it to the room where his baskets were left, and depositing it among the rest." Does this beating out of the poison-fangs explain the words in the verse following that in which the Psalmist says of the wicked, "Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear: which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely. Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth"[2]? As to "stopping their ears," it is of course well known that the serpent has no external ears or opening for sound, at all, so that the words are only a figure of speech for refusing to listen to the voice or music of the charmer. But this did not satisfy the theologians of former days; they actually invented the fancy that serpents stopped their ears with their tail;[3] though, after all, they could only stop one at a time.

[1] *Missionary Magazine*, 1837. [2] Ps. lviii. 5, 6.
[3] Bythner, *Lyre of David*. Dee's Translation, p. 165.

The extent to which these reptiles can be tamed is seen more fully in India than elsewhere. Taking out eight or ten different kinds from their baskets, the charmers lay them on the ground, over which the creatures presently begin to glide away in every direction. Their master then puts the pipe to his lips, and plays some of his peculiar notes, at which the serpents stop, as though enchanted, and turning to the musician, approach within two feet of him, raise their heads from the ground, and sway backwards and forwards, in time with the tune, thoroughly under the spell of the sweet sounds. When he ceases playing, they drop their heads and remain quiet on the ground, till replaced in the charmer's baskets.

The Hebrews evidently were very familiar with the serpent. Zophar, in the Book of Job, shared the idea, prevalent still among the common people, that the forked, sharp tongue was that which bit and poisoned a victim, and he knew of the habit the charmers had of sucking out the poison when anyone was bitten;[1] but, generally, the infusion of the venom is correctly attributed to the bite.[2] The habit of the serpent tribe of hiding in walls is noticed in Ecclesiastes: "Whoso breaketh down a gadair, a serpent shall bite him;"[3] the "gadair" being the dry stone wall of a vineyard or orchard, still known in Palestine as a "yedar." So, in Amos, of serpents hiding in the crevices of the mud walls of houses: "As if a man went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him."[4] That serpents are produced from eggs was known to Isaiah, who tells us, the wicked "hatch serpents' eggs;"[5] and their wonderful mode of progression on a smooth rock was one of the four things too mysterious for Agar to understand.[6]

[1] Job xx. 16. [2] Num. xxi. 9; Eccles. x. 8—11; Prov. xxiii. 32. [3] Eccles. x. 8. [4] Amos v. 19. [5] Isa. lix. 5. [6] Prov. xxx. 19.

A third kind of serpent mentioned in Scripture has been identified with the cerastes or horned snake, a small creature from twelve to eighteen inches long, of a sandy colour. Its name, "shephiphon," occurs only once in the Bible, but the fact that the Arabs still call the cerastes "shiphon" leaves no doubt as to the reptile meant. "Dan shall be a serpent by the way," says the dying Jacob, "an adder in the path, that biteth the horse's heels, so that his rider shall fall backward."[1] It is the habit of the horned snake to coil itself in the sand, where it basks in the foot-print of a camel or other animal, darting out suddenly on any passing beast. "So great is the terror which the sight of it inspires in horses," says Canon Tristram, "that I have known mine, when I was riding in the Sahara, suddenly start and rear, trembling and perspiring in every limb, and no persuasion would induce him to proceed. I was quite unable to account for his terror till I noticed a cerastes coiled up in a depression, two or three paces in front, with its basilisk eyes steadily fixed on us, and no doubt preparing for a spring as the horse passed."[2] Like the wily snake, Dan was to owe his successes more to stratagem than to open bravery: a trait marked in the history of the tribe.

The snake known in the Authorised Version as the viper seems to have been identified by Canon Tristram with the sand-viper, a reptile about a foot in length.[3] We read also of "vipers" in the New Testament, but the word used is that common, in Greek, for any poisonous snake. The viper that bit St. Paul may have been the ordinary Mediterranean viper, though, owing to the clearing away of forests from Malta, no snake is now found

[1] Gen. xlix. 17. [2] Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 274.

[3] Heb. "epheh" (Job xx. 16; Isa. xxx. 6; lix. 5). The Arabic name of the sand-viper is "el ephah."

in the island. The Mediterranean viper is fond of lurking among wood, and it will be remembered that the snake which fastened on St. Paul's hand came out of the fagots for the fire.[1]

The "fiery serpents" which troubled Israel in the wilderness have not been identified with any particular species, and seem to owe the name rather to the effects of their bite than to any other peculiarity, especially as we find the Greek Bible speaking of them only as the "deadly serpents."[2]

We might, indeed, with strict exactness, translate the name as "the serpent of the burning bite," though there are poisonous serpents in Arabia with fiery-red spots and marks.[3] The burning heat produced by their bite might well give them the name of "fiery," just as the Greeks called a kind of serpent whose bite made the face fiery-red with its poison, and the limbs swell, "prēstēr," the "inflamer," and "kausos," the "burner," and another, whose bite caused mortal thirst, "dipsas," or the thirst-causing serpent. The "fiery flying serpent" of Isaiah[4] evidently does not refer to any serpent with wings, for there are no such creatures, but rather to the swift spring of some especially deadly snake, as we say of even a quadruped that "it flew along the road," when we mean simply that it went so quickly that we could only compare its speed with that of flying.

The dull eyes of the serpent are the very opposite of intelligent, yet its "subtilty" has in all ages been a familiar expression in widely-separate nations. This must be in allusion to its craft in hiding till its victim approaches, or its secrecy in gliding towards it; also, perhaps, to its power, in some cases, of fascinating its prey, and its

[1] Tristram, p. 277.
[2] Num. xxi. 6—8; Deut. viii. 15.
[3] *Schubert's Travels*, ii. 406.
[4] Isa. xiv. 29.

wariness in avoiding danger. It is in this last sense that our Saviour counsels the disciples to be "wise as serpents:"[1] avoiding unnecessary invitation of persecution, and gratuitous incitement to ill-will. In the same figurative sense we must understand the words of Scripture respecting the serpent eating dust,[2] as only a vivid mode of expressing the deepest humiliation, as when the heathen are described as "licking up the dust of the feet" of Israel,[3] or when the Psalmist speaks of "eating ashes like bread."[4] At the same time, the fact that the serpent generally kills its prey on the ground, of course implies that it must swallow dust, but not more than other creatures who also eat their food from the earth; less, in fact, for it does not rend its victim, but swallows it whole. It is a striking and curious fact, in this connection, that we often find on the monuments of Egypt a deity in human shape piercing the head of a serpent with a spear: a remarkable illustration of the wide dissemination of the tradition of the Fall.

The journey from Gerar to Beersheba is over much the same kind of country as that from Gaza to Gerar: low hills, dotted now, in the spring-time, with herds: plains sprinkled with flocks of brown-faced, broad-tailed sheep, and goats, generally in charge of women or children; a few black tents, here and there, with a miserable shepherd, in a sheep-skin coat, with sleeves, the woolly side out; a dagger-handle peering out of his leather belt or girdle, and a long stick in his hand; his club probably hidden under his coat. An Arab passed us on horseback, carrying a spear about twelve feet long, with a cruel-looking iron head, ornamented with a tuft of wool, and, at the other end, a long iron butt, sharp-pointed, to thrust into the ground

[1] Matt. x. 16.
[2] Gen. iii. 14; Isa. lxv. 25; Mic. vii. 17.
[3] Isa. xlix. 23; Ps. lxxii. 9.
[4] Ps. cii. 9.

before the tent, so that the spear might be upright, ready to be snatched, its position also being a token of the owner's authority as sheikh. So, the spear of Saul was "stuck at his bolster,"[1] or, rather, "head." The Arab had, besides, a sword and pistols, and a white head-cloth, or "kefiyeh," with the usual ring of soft camels'-hair rope twice round, to keep it in its place, the tails of the kerchief falling over his breast. His complexion was very black, but his features handsome. A brown-striped "abba," over his inner cotton dress, completed his costume. I asked to look at his spear, and he at once handed it to me, saying that he "gave" it to me; but this was only a formal act of courtesy, meaning nothing, like that of Ephron the son of Heth, four thousand years ago, when he affected to give Abraham the Cave of Machpelah without payment; intending all the while to let him have it only for its full value.[2] Returning him his formidable weapon, therefore, with many thanks, we rode on the one way; he, the other.

[1] 1 Sam. xxvi. 7. [2] Gen. xxiii. 11.

CHAPTER XII.

BEERSHEBA.

The wells of Beersheba are on the edge of the wady, or torrent-bed, Es Seba, which, as I have said, sweeps in a long curve towards the north-west, till it reaches the sea a little south of Gaza. There are now only three wells: two, filled with water; the third, dry: but no traces of the other four, thought once to have been here, are visible. The existing wells are built of fine solid masonry, and are in good condition, according to the Oriental standard. There is no wall round them, so that it would be really dangerous to approach them in the dark, or carelessly, and the stones are worn, far down the sides, into deep furrows by the ropes with which, for many centuries, the Arabs have drawn water from them, for themselves and their flocks and herds. It would be pleasant to think that they are the very wells used by Abraham and the patriarchs, but, although the excavations may be the same, the masonry certainly is not, since, fifteen courses down, on the south side of the large well, Captain Conder discovered a stone with an Arabic inscription, dated 505 A.H.—that is, after Mahomet's flight from Mecca—in other words, in the twelfth century of our era. Rude stone troughs stand round the two wells which have water: nine round the larger one; five round the smaller.

The wady below is about 300 paces broad; its bed filled with stones, some of large size, rolled from the distant hills by the fury of the winter storms. On the low hills bordering the wady on its northern edge can be traced the ruins of what was anciently the town of Beersheba, for there was once a Roman garrison stationed here, and a considerable population. The houses appear to have been scattered over several small hills and the hollows between; traces of them being visible for half a mile along the edge of the wady, and a quarter of a mile back. On the south side of the ravine a wall of hewn stone extends for several hundred feet under the bank, apparently to prevent it from being washed away during the winter rains. The ground, like other ancient sites, is largely covered with fragments of pottery; the direction of some of the streets can be traced, and there are vestiges of some public buildings; but if it were not for the wells there would be no inducement to visit the spot.

Here, then, amidst dark-skinned Arabs, whose territory extended a few miles northward from the wells, were the remains of Beersheba. The poverty of the Ishmaelites, according to our notions, seemed extreme, though some of them had flocks and herds. The women, in some cases at least, wore no veils, and certainly they could not be called handsome, if one could judge from a poor creature who came to ask bakshish. Her dress had no sleeves, and showed her bust even a shade more fully than our full-dress at evening parties; in fact, nearly to her waist, round which was wound a cord, the first girdle I ever noticed on one of her sex. Her hair hung down the sides of her head, in confusion; on her left arm, which was bare, were four different metal and glass ornaments, and her left nostril was set off with a ring which passed through the cartilage, as earrings do through the

lobe of the ear. From her head a kind of sack hung down her back, part of it filled with a heavy brown child, whose head, which was all that was visible, was carefully done up in a close-fitting cap. The ancient Israelites, like this poor creature, delighted in personal ornaments. They had rings for the arms, for the feet, for the neck, for the nose, and for the ear. Some were only of horn or of ivory, but Rebekah was won for Isaac by two bracelets of gold,[1] and bracelets were among the free-will offerings to Moses, after the sin at Baal-peor.[2] Even the men wore rings on the arm, for the Amalekite brought to David the one he had taken from the arm of Saul.[3] The ladies of Jerusalem gloried in rings on their ankles—Isaiah's "ornaments of the legs"[4]—joined by a chain, which made them mince their steps, and clattered as their wearers moved[5]—"walking and mincing as they went, and making a tinkling with their feet." Strangely enough, we are told that Judith put on these mock fetters when arraying herself to go forth to kill Holofernes.[6] Necklaces are still common among the native women here, and among the Hebrews were worn not only by the fair sex, but by men. The spouse in Canticles boasted of this adornment,[7] and Ezekiel pictures Jerusalem as a maiden with "earrings in her ears, and a chain on her neck."[8] But the other sex was as vain, for obedience to a father and mother is compared, in Proverbs, to chains about a son's neck—his special glory.[9] Nose-rings, such as my Bedouin friend wore, are common. At times you see the hole in the side of the nose marked by a mere star of metal, to keep it open; at others, a ring, it may be, an inch and a half wide, sticks out, forming what, to Western eyes, is a

[1] Gen. xxiv. 22, 30, 47.
[2] Num. xxxi. 50.
[3] 2 Sam. i. 8, 10.
[4] Isa. iii. 20.
[5] Isa. iii. 16.
[6] Judith x. 4.
[7] Cant. iv. 9.
[8] Ezek. xvi. 11.
[9] Prov. i. 9; iii. 3.

hideous disfigurement of the face. Such a ring Rebekah, with bounding heart, allowed Eliezer to put "upon her face," when he met her at the well;[1] and "nose-jewels" were still fashionable in Isaiah's time,[2] nearly 1,400 years later. Jerusalem, under the figure of a maiden, is adorned with a nose-ring in the picture of her given by Ezekiel,[3] and in Proverbs "a fair woman without discretion" is compared to a golden nose-ring in a swine's snout.[4] Strange that such a custom, which makes it necessary for a woman to hold up the ring with one hand during meals, while she raises the food to her mouth with the other, should still be followed, after thousands of years!

Earrings one can easily understand, for the ears lend themselves to vanity in many ways. We see them in the ears of men on the Assyrian tablets, and Gideon's war-cloak could not gather up the mound of golden earrings taken from the Midianite warriors he had slain.[5] Nor could the ladies in Israel boast superiority to the other sex in this respect, for even in the desert of Sinai enough golden earrings were given by the matrons and their sons and daughters to make the golden calf.[6]

The worst feature of this vanity, however, was that too many of these rings and jewels were regarded by the Hebrews not only as ornaments, but as charms and amulets. They wore "little moons," such as even to-day are a favourite female decoration in the East, the new moon being a symbol of good fortune, and small crescents, copied from its shape, being regarded also as a protection against the black arts. The earrings which Jacob took from his people and buried[7] were both ornaments and

[1] Gen. xxiv. 47. [2] Isa. iii. 21. [3] Ezek. xvi. 12. [4] Prov. xi. 22.
[5] Judg. viii. 25. [6] Ex. xxxii. 3, 4. [7] Gen. xxxv. 4.

charms, which the patriarch did well to put out of sight. Nor did belief in these spells and talismans die out in later ages, for Isaiah mentions amulets as a part of female dress in his day, just as they are among Eastern women now.[1] They were either gems, or precious stones, or plates of gold and silver, like our brooches, magical spells being engraved on them, or hidden in them, to guard the wearer from harm when she had hung one round her neck. It is quite probable, indeed, that the old Jews were as superstitious as the present natives of Palestine, of all ranks; these would be very uncomfortable without any amulets or magic charms, not only for their own protection, but for that of their children, houses, herds, flocks, and even fruit-trees. Horses and cattle bear them round their necks; men, women, and children either carry them as we do, in the form of a locket, or hide them in their bosoms; and the very trees of the orchard are guarded by mystic characters marked on them.

These charms are generally scraps from the religious books of the wearer, written after certain rules, perhaps also with mysterious diagrams; the document being sewn up in a small bag, either three-cornered or like a heart, worn next the skin from infancy to old age, as a Roman Catholic wears his scapulary. Some of these spells are believed to have the most varied power against all enemies, ghostly or bodily, turning aside bullets in war, guarding against robbers, and warding off illness or accidents, the only wonder being that the wearers ever know what trouble is. It is, moreover, very curious to notice that all the sects of all the religions of the country have equal trust in these worthless trifles.

Beersheba, as the Bible tells us, got its name from the treaty made respecting it between Abraham and the

[1] Isa. iii. 20, "lehashim"; in A.V. "earrings."

Philistines ; the two parties to the agreement confirming it with a mutual oath, accompanied by a gift of seven sheep from Abraham to Abimelech, as the formal sign which guaranteed to the patriarch, thenceforward, the possession of the wells which he had dug. In allusion to this, the word means either "the Well of the Oath," or "the Well of the Seven."[1] Herodotus tells us that much in the same way the Arabs marked seven stones with their blood, and kept them for witness respecting contracts made, having first laid them between the parties contracting.[2] Always devout, Abraham, we are informed, planted a grove of tamarisk-trees, or, as some translate it, a single tamarisk, under which to build an altar to Jehovah, the stones lying so plentifully in the torrent-bed below supplying abundant material. Round these wells the Father of the Faithful sojourned for many years, and here Isaac also lingered, the Philistines confirming the possession of the wells to him by a new treaty, sealed, as usual, with an oath.[3] From this spot Jacob set out on his weary journey to Mesopotamia, and hither he returned in his old age, on his way to Joseph, in Egypt.

At the conquest of Canaan, Beersheba was assigned to Judah,[4] but it was afterwards made over to Simeon,[5] and became the southern limit of the possessions of Israel, "from Dan to Beersheba" being recognised as equivalent to the whole country of the Hebrews, from north to south.[6] In later days, when the Ten Tribes seceded, the kingdom of Judah extended from Beersheba to the mountains of Ephraim.[7] At Beersheba, in Samuel's day, a local court was held for the south country, under Abiah, the son of the prophet,[8] so that there must have been some

[1] Gen. xxi. 28, 29 ; xxvi. 33.
[2] Herod., iii. 8.
[3] Gen xxvi. 33.
[4] Josh. xv. 28.
[5] Josh. xix. 2.
[6] Judg. xx. 1 ; 2 Chron. xxx. 5.
[7] 2 Chron. xix. 4.
[8] 1 Sam. viii. 2.

community round the wells even in that early age. Silent and desolate as they now are, they had once the honour of sending a maiden who had grown up beside them, to be Queen of Judah—Zibiah, the wife of Ahaziah, and mother of King Jehoash.[1] A hundred years later, Beersheba had become, with Bethel and Gilgal, a centre of idolatrous worship, to which pilgrimages from the northern kingdom were made by great numbers—a sin denounced vehemently by the brave prophet Amos.[2] Deserted during the Captivity, it became once more a Jewish settlement after the return from Babylon.[3] It was at Beersheba also that Elijah, fleeing to Horeb to escape the vengeance of Jezebel, left his attendant, himself going a day's journey farther south, when "he lay and slept" under a bush of the broom so common in this neighbourhood; for it was not, as one version has it, under a "juniper."[4] Glad of any shade in such a weary land, the prophet would be additionally cheered if he passed on his way in spring, by the white and pink blossom which covers the broom, even before its small leaves have appeared. It is the largest and most noticeable plant in the desert, and it afforded shelter to Dean Stanley in the only storm of rain he encountered in these parts.[5]

Unfortunately, the beauty of the shrub is no protection against the eagerness of the poor Arabs to make any profit that is possible in their wilderness haunts. The roots of the broom have long been famous for yielding the finest charcoal, and this seals the fate of the plant, wherever it is found in any quantity. Digging up the whole bush, the roots of which are much larger than the stem, the natives char as much of it as is fit for burning and carry it to Cairo, where it fetches a high price. The Hebrews, it would seem, did the same, for we read of "coals of juniper"—

[1] 2 Kings xii. 1. [2] Amos v. 4, 5; viii. 14. [3] Neh. xi. 30.
[4] 1 Kings xix. 4, 5. [5] *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 80.

that is, of broom;[1] and it would even seem that in times of famine, caused by the hideous cruelty of war, fugitives dwelling in "the clefts of the valleys, in holes of the earth and of the rocks," "in the gloom of wasteness and desolation," dug up the roots of this shrub as a kind of food;[2] for, though very bitter, the softer parts might keep them alive, the plant being leguminous, and thus in some measure nourishing.

In the days of St. Jerome—that is, about 400 years after Christ—Beersheba was still a considerable village, with a Roman garrison: a sad enough post for the fashionable officers, and a dismal one for their soldiers. In the early Middle Ages it was the seat of a bishop, but in the fourteenth century[3] it had fallen into solitude.

The country round Beersheba is a rolling plain, broken by deeper or shallower torrent-beds, and covered for miles, in spring, with grass, flowers, and tufts of plants and shrubs. But it is very different in summer. The herbage is then entirely burnt up, and only a bare and desolate waste, as cheerless as the desert itself, is to be seen, unless there have been showers, which are very rare in the hot months. The Bedouins now move off to more attractive spots, and the wells are left solitary. Nowhere, far or near, is there any longer a relic of civilisation—all is abandoned to the wandering Arab. Yet it was once very different. Many miles to the south, in the desert of El-Tih, Professor E. H. Palmer[4] found ancient native houses in perfect preservation. They were seven or eight feet in diameter, or even larger, built of stone in a circular shape, with oval tops, and small doors about two feet square, with lintels and door-posts; all the stones used having

[1] Ps. cxx. 4. [2] Job xxx. 4, 6 (R.V.). [3] Reland, *Palästina*, p. 620.
[4] See *The Desert of the Exodus*, 2 vols. (*passim*), for this and the facts that come immediately after.

been so carefully selected as to bear the appearance of having been hewn. Yet they are certainly unhewn, though those set in the doorway may have been rubbed smooth on other stones. In one dwelling a flint arrow-head and some small shells were found. Were these the houses of the old Amalekites? It is quite possible that they were. Close by them were some stone circles. Do these point to the ancient religion of the long-vanished builders? Deep wells with troughs round them, still in use for flocks and herds, speak of the presence of Arabs in numbers, at some seasons of the year, in these thirsty regions. Circular walls of stone, with a defence of prickly bushes over them, provide defence for man and beast.[1] All this is in full sight of the mountains of Sinai. The whole country was at one time inhabited. Nearly every hill has ancient dwellings on its top, or stone circles. Great cairns, also, are frequent; raised, apparently, over the more or less illustrious dead. Whoever built them, whether Amalekites or a later race, seem to have buried their dead in short stone coffins, over which they piled the cairns, surrounding these with a stone circle, and offering sacrifices to the departed within the ring—for charcoal and burnt earth are found inside it. Were these sacrifices the "offerings to the dead," to eat which was so great a sin to the Israelites? The custom still survives in the offering of sacrifices at the tombs of Mahommedan saints.

Spring is varied in these desert regions south of Beersheba by fierce rains, dense sand-storms, and oppressive heat; but even amidst the barest landscape Professor Palmer came upon a herd of 150 milch-camels, which contrived to get food from the stray broom-plants and thorny bushes growing here and there. At one place

[1] See remarks on sheepfolds, p. 221, *ante*.

he found ruins in which beams of acacia-wood were still to be seen, though no trees of the kind now grow in the desert. Could the region have been wooded at some former time? Seventy miles south of Beersheba, remains of large numbers of the primitive stone houses are still numerous. Ravines covered with vegetation are found at intervals. Hills rise on every side; in some cases to a height of 2,000 feet, but broad stretches of plain lie between. In one barren, sunburnt valley are two long low walls, to regulate irrigation during the rains: one 180, the other 240 yards long, both very carefully built; two rows of stones being beautifully set in a straight line, with smaller pebbles between. Other steps or terraces, all faced in the same way with stone walls, had once sent vivifying moisture over both sides of the ravine. The whole country, indeed, though now, from want of care and failure of the water supply, little more than a barren waste, shows signs of very extensive cultivation, even at a comparatively modern period. The actual desert, to the south, was also much more suited to maintain a population in former times than it is now; the remains of houses, the presence of wells, and the traces of terraces showing this. Fertility has, in the course of ages, receded to the north. One of the most striking characteristics of "the south" is that for miles the hill-sides and valleys are covered with small stone-heaps, in regular swathes, over which grapes were trained, and which still retain the name of "grape-mounds." The valley of Eshcol, from which the Jewish spies carried off the great bunch of grapes, may not, therefore, have been near Hebron, as has been supposed, but far south of Beersheba, and near the Hebrew head-quarters at Kadesh.

The number of Christian churches in this far southern region in early times, as shown by their ruins, is one

of the strangest features of the district. Fifty miles from Beersheba is a cave cut out in the rock, once used for a church, as may be seen from the crosses and Christian signs on the walls. Near it, on the opposite side of the wady, is a much larger cave, also cut in the hill-side, with a staircase hewn out to lead up to it: the hermitage, it would seem, of some early monks. All the hills round are covered with ruins and stone-heaps, the remains of some primitive people; and the hill-sides are crossed and recrossed by innumerable paths. Perhaps, one of the "cities of the south," or of Negeb, was once here, but if so the country is sadly changed, for no city or village could exist in it now. Nor are the caves confined to one spot. Many hills are pierced with them. Professor Palmer thinks that the "south country," or "Negeb," began about fifty miles below Beersheba, but the signs of former habitation are widely scattered far beyond this point. Thirty-five miles south of it a broad valley opens out, covered with verdure; grass, asphodel, and broom growing in great profusion, flowers carpeting the soil, immense herds of cattle passing to the pastures and to the wells, and great flocks of fat sheep and goats feeding on the neighbouring hills. Nine terebinth-trees, very old, spread out their wide branches in the valley, and give it a pleasant aspect. Terraces, to check the rush of winter floods, and distribute them over the whole of the soil, succeed each other along its whole length, just as I saw them afterwards in the great wady leading up from Beit Jibrin to Hebron. A well-built stone aqueduct carries water from the wells to a large reservoir, also built of stone; and there are ruins of some large buildings. All this, however, belongs to the distant past. Other valleys, as we get north, show equal signs of former diligent cultivation. A fort and a church, of which the remains still crown a

hill-top near, overlook countless walls and terraces built across the Wady Hanein, formerly a valley of gardens; for though many of the large, flat, strongly-embanked terraces may once have been planted with fruit-trees, and others laid out as kitchen gardens, many miles were still left for the cultivation of grain. The black, flint-covered hill-slopes round the fort are covered with long rows of stones, carefully swept together and piled into numberless black heaps — the mounds on which vines were trained. Yet all is now desert, and has been so for many centuries. Ruins of forts, churches, towns, terraces, grape-mounds, and aqueducts are, in fact, numerous in all directions. The ruins of Sebaita, twenty-five miles south of Beersheba, cover a space 500 yards long and from 200 to 300 yards wide, and show the remains of three churches, a tower, and two reservoirs. The houses are of stone, undressed near the ground, hewn farther from it; and are all built, in the lower storeys, in arches, thick beams of stone being placed across these to form the roof. Nearly every house has its well, about two feet in diameter, and there are many conveniently placed at the street-corners; the streets themselves being distinctly traceable. Many of the house-walls are still from twenty to twenty-five feet high. But all is now stillness and utter desolation. Crosses on the houses and in the churches show that the town was Christian, but how long has it been abandoned? Sebaita is, possibly, the successor of Zephath of the Bible, which Judah and Simeon once took from the Canaanites, so utterly destroying it that they called its name Hormah, or "the Desolated Place."[1] All the way to Beersheba similar long-deserted towns occur: a proof of the great change in the physical condition of the country within the Christian era.

[1] Judg. i. 17. The identification is very doubtful.

Cisterns forty feet square, partly hewn out of the rock, partly built; broken Corinthian capitals; ruins of churches and sites of towns, dot the country, though as we approach Beersheba the stones have, in great measure, been carried away to Gaza and elsewhere, for new buildings. This accounts for the absence of similar remains in the plain of Philistia or elsewhere, within reach of existing communities; but the region beyond them, dry and waste as it now is, shows what the whole land must once have been.

Between Beersheba and Hebron the road, or rather track, lies through the Wady-el-Khalil — that is, the Hebron valley, which rises fully 2,000 feet in thirty miles; the whole way being thus a rough climb. On this retired and little-travelled route evidences of dense population, in former times, are no less striking than on the now desert, sand-blown South. Ten miles north-east of the Beersheba wells are the ruins of a town among the hills, so full of ancient wells and reservoirs that Palmer gave it the name of "the City of Cisterns," a whole system of cisterns literally undermining the hills. The houses are still standing, in ruins, along the crest of a triple hill; their walls built of huge blocks of flint conglomerate, many of which measure six feet in length, four in thickness, and two in breadth; the houses formed of them being mostly of one room, about thirty feet by twenty. One large building has the appearance of a temple; and the hills around are still covered with ruins. Another similar town, Sa'awi, lies about ten miles east of Beersheba. Fifteen miles north-east of the latter place, and 1,400 feet above it, are the ruins of Dhahariyeh,[1] at the entrance of Palestine proper, among hills covered with vegetation and dotted with the dwarf oak, which first appears here.

[1] Beersheba (level), 781 feet; Dhahariyeh, 2,180 feet.

The valley is banked up with strong walls and terraces of venerable age, running along where now there is no cultivation. Dhahariyeh itself is surrounded with fields, and there are two fine olive-trees at the foot of the hill on which it stands. Its houses consist chiefly of caves in the natural rock, some of them with rude arches carved over the doorways, and all of the greatest antiquity. Small terraces on the hill-side have been chosen for the excavation of these caves, the level obtained in front being fenced round with a mud wall, as a courtyard before the cave itself; dogs, goats, chickens, children, and other members of the household using it to take the air. These strange dwellings must be exactly like those of the old Horites, or "Cave-men," who, in Abraham's day, lived in Mount Seir,[1] where they were afterwards attacked and virtually exterminated by the children of Esau—that is, the Edomites—who seized their country,[2] with circumstances of horror which are, perhaps, referred to by Job, in verses I have already quoted in part. "Men in whom ripe age is, perished. They are gaunt with want and famine: they flee into the wilderness, into the gloom of wasteness and desolation. They pluck salt-wort by the bushes: and the roots of the broom are their meat. They are driven forth from the midst of men; they cry after them as after a thief. In the clefts of the valleys must they dwell, in holes of the earth and of the rocks."[3] The cave dwellings of Dhahariyeh have been inhabited by generation after generation since the days of this forgotten race. The village evidently occupies an ancient site, the foundations of a building of massive masonry, originally in three arched apartments, still remaining in the centre of it,

[1] Gen. xiv. 6. [2] Deut. ii. 12, 22.

[3] Job xxx. 2—6 (R.V.). See Ewald, *Gesch.*, i. 304, 305. The lineage of the Horites is given in Gen. xxxvi. 20—30; 1 Chron. i. 38—42.

while old arches and other remains of antiquity appear at every corner.[1] It brings us back, however, to a more prosaic picture of Palestine as it now is, to find, on entering the three-arched ruin, that you are immediately covered with fleas, so countless that you have to sweep and shake them off by hundreds from your arms, legs, and clothing. The women are all unveiled, and all apparently ugly, but eager, poor creatures, to sell their eggs and chickens to strangers, rushing out of their caves as one passes, to cry their wares in loud and almost angry screams.

Tell Arad, once a royal city of the Canaanites,[2] is now only a large white mound, about twenty miles slightly north-east of Beersheba; and six miles south-west of it is a ruined town, Keseifeh, with the same wreck of houses as elsewhere, the remains of a small church, and traces of tesselated pavement. Twelve or thirteen miles east of Beersheba, and about six miles south-east of Keseifeh, are the ruins of the ancient Moladah,[3] with two finely-built wells at the foot of the hill on which the town stood, one of them dry, but the other containing good water, with marble troughs round it, like those at Beersheba. Belonging first to Judah, Moladah was afterwards handed over to Simeon, with whom it remained till the Captivity, after which it became again a Jewish community.[4] Five miles to the south of it are the ruins of Aroer;[5] but the only relics of the ancient city are some wells, two or three of them built up with rude masonry, and only a few containing water. It has been usual to think of the Simeonites as having merely a half-barren range of burnt upland pastures as their territory; but it is clear from the ruins

[1] *Pal. Fund Reports*, 1870, p. 39.
[2] Josh. xii. 14.
[3] Josh. xv. 26; xix. 2.
[4] 1 Chron. iv. 28; Neh. xi. 26.
[5] 1 Sam. xxx. 28.

that so plentifully cover the whole country, that while free to follow their pastoral prepossessions, they had also, on every side, all the advantages of a stirring, civilised population, and a region capable of yielding everything they could wish.

CHAPTER XIII.

GAZA TO FALUJEH.

I STARTED from Gaza to Hebron on the 2nd of March, with three horses, three donkeys, and four men, the donkeys carrying two tents and other requisites. Of the four men, the first was a black from the Soudan, but he could not tell his birthplace. A red fez; a loose old cloth jacket reaching to his thighs, the elbows showing themselves prominently through the short sleeves; a striped black-and-white petticoat of mixed cotton and wool, and cotton drawers, encased his tall thin figure, which terminated in bare legs, and ancient leather slippers with no backs. He had married in Gaza, was perhaps five-and-twenty, and laughed pleasantly all the time. Hamet, the second donkey-man, who was also young, wore a white cotton skull-cap, with red worsted-work setting it off at the edges; a wide blue cotton jacket reaching to his thighs, with a triangle of striped cotton, edged with red, for an ornament, down the back; a striped cotton petticoat, over a blue one, coming down to his knees; his legs and feet rejoicing in freedom. The third, Redwan, hardly a man, but very manly, had a blue cotton gaberdine with sleeves, and over it a sleeveless, close-fitting, old brown-and-white woollen "abba;" a woollen skull-cap, with a handkerchief tied round it, to make it a turban; his brown legs and feet were naked. The fourth, Hajji Iesa—"Pilgrim Jesus"!—a middle-aged man, who had earned his title of "Hajji" by having been at Mecca, wore a dirty white turban, a white thick

cotton sack over his shirt and down to his calves, and a leathern girdle or belt round his waist to keep his clothes together; his legs and feet being bare.

A fifth person joined our cavalcade, to take advantage of our company, a tall, thin man, on a donkey so small that his feet just escaped the ground. He was a colporteur, employed in selling Bibles and Testaments over the country, and he proposed to go with us as far as Beit Jibrin. Of light-brown complexion, with a long face and long Syrian nose, but a pleasant-looking man, with his great black eyes, he was decked out in a fez; a striped blue-and-white cotton, sleeved, sack, reaching to his calves; white cotton trousers; stockings, and elastic-side boots past their best. At the sides of his microscopic ass, underneath him, were two small saddle-bags of old carpet, so far gone that I feared he might distribute part of his stock of the Scriptures on the road instead of among the population. A thick stick in his hand, and a red sash, with a revolver in it, round his waist, finished his outward presentment. The missionary at Gaza, my worthy friend, Mr. Saphir, accompanied me as guide and companion. The hire of a horse and three asses, and of the men who came with us, was £3 13s. 4d.[1] for eight days. We had two tents, one belonging to Mr. Saphir, the other rented from its owner at Gaza for sixpence a day! These wonderful prices, of course, were those of private owners, not of "Tourists' Agencies." At Jerusalem, or Joppa, to hire from an "Agency" a traveller's tent, and a common one for the men, with the attendants and beasts, would have cost from four to five pounds a day.

Out, then, and away—past the Tomb of Samson, a place of pilgrimage for the Moslem; then under the long avenues of ancient olive-trees, the glory of Gaza, towards

[1] Twenty-one Medjidieh.

Beit Hanun. On the roadside sat a counterpart of blind Bartimæus, turbaned, cross-legged, in a blue gaberdine with short sleeves, a stick by his side, his hand out for charity. Blindness is a terribly prevalent curse in the East—the desert alone excepted, for a blind Bedouin is rare. In Egypt, it has been said, one person in twenty is affected in his eyes, and the lowest estimate gives one blind in the hundred, while in England and Norway the proportion is only one in a thousand. It is impossible, indeed, to come upon any number of men, either in Palestine or on the Nile, without finding some of them sightless. The causes of this are not the heat, nor even the dust, so much as the rapid changes of temperature between day and night, which are greatest on the sea-coast, the special seat of this melancholy evil. The inflammation thus occasioned would not, however, lead to a great deal of blindness elsewhere; the neglect of any attempt to check the trouble is the real explanation; and this arises partly from laziness and stupidity, but much more from superstitious prejudices against medical treatment. It is most pitiful to see numbers of children with ulcers on the cornea eating away the sight, without any attempt being made to cure the evil. Wherever you halt, the blind come round you with the other children; and it is no wonder that when the fame of our Lord as the "opener of the eyes" spread abroad, numbers of all ages who were thus afflicted assembled to ask His gracious assistance.[1] It would seem, indeed, from the more frequent mention of blindness in the New Testament than in the Old, as though blindness had increased in the course of ages, though the law of Moses curses "him that maketh the blind to wander out of the way," or "puts a stumbling-block before him."[2] But I had almost forgotten one great local cause of blindness,

[1] Luke vii. 21; John v. 3. [2] Lev. xix. 14; Deut. xxvii. 18.

which everyone visiting the East must have noticed: the spread of eye disease through the medium of flies. These pests carry infection, on their feet and proboscis, from one child to another, numbers of them lighting on the corner of the eye, and never apparently being driven off. Mothers, in fact, allow them to cling in half-dozens round the eyes of their babies, to ward off the "evil eye"; and it is sad to see the young creatures so habituated to what would torture Western children as never to resent it, even by a twitch of the cheek.

We passed Beit Hanun, with its dirty mud hovels and its rain-pond, round which a crowd of ragged children were playing, some naked boys swimming and paddling in it, and the village matrons filling their jars from it for household uses. A little farther on we met some people going to Gaza—one, a soldier, returning from the army, a dagger and pistols in his belt. As he went by the ruffian broke out in curses at us as Christians; but he reckoned without his host, for in a moment my fiery little missionary friend, who knows Arabic as he does English, rode up to him, his riding-stick uplifted, and asked him how he dared to insult strangers, ending by telling him that he was only fit to fight women, not men! I did not know all this till afterwards; but the fellow was cowed, and went off as meekly as a lamb.

The broad plain, or rather rolling land, through which we passed, was here and there green with lentils or barley, elsewhere ploughed for summer crops, but in large parts wild and untilled; offering pasture for flocks of sheep and goats, and herds of cattle. The little village of Nejid, at the foot of a little side-bay in the low hills of the Shephelah, on our right, was the first we passed after leaving Beit Hanun. Numbers of camels, cattle, and calves fed on the green recess before the

houses, which were built only of unburnt bricks of black earth. A number of peasants who had put out their right eye or mutilated their thumb, in order to escape the hated conscription for the Turkish army, were met on one occasion by a traveller at this place. Some of the people were now enjoying a meal, in the open air, sitting on mats woven of straw or palm-leaves; and it was noticeable that all had taken off their shoes, as was evidently the custom among the Hebrews in Bible times, since they were told to keep on their sandals at the Passover supper as a thing unusual.[1] One or two of the houses were larger than the rest; the best one being built in a succession of rooms round a large square court, of course unpaved; each separate room with a door for itself. The flat roof rested on rough poles, covered with corn-stalks and branches, over which layers of earth had been trodden and rolled, till the whole was solid. Great corn-bins, made, like the house itself, of mud, leaned against the walls of the rooms, so that the whole was, no doubt, very like the simple chambers in which the peasant-king, Ishbosheth, was taking his midday sleep when he was murdered.[2] Two Mahommedans near found it was one of their hours of prayer, and having spread their "abbas" on the ground, they turned their faces to Mecca and began their fervent devotions. In these, the words "Allah is great" were repeated eight times, and then they kneeled down and touched the ground with their foreheads. It must have been much the same with the ancient Israelites, for the word "Selah," which so often stands at the end of a verse, means simply "Bow;" thus giving directions to the supplicant in this particular.[3]

The people are very friendly, and, as a rule, very honest, for I was told of a case where a traveller having

[1] Ex. xii. 11. [2] 2 Sam. iv. 5, 6. [3] Hitzig, Ps. iii. 2.

paid for some bread which was not yet baked, and having left before he got it, the son of the house rode after him for five or six miles, to give him the piastre's[1] worth he should have had before. A mile north of Nejid we passed through Simsim, which lies pleasantly on a low hill, amidst trees. Large herds of cattle and flocks of sheep grazed here and there in the little valleys among the hills, or on the slopes. Was it in this rich district that "King Uzziah hewed out many cisterns in the wilderness, for he had much cattle; both on the Shephelah or low hill-land, and in the Mishor," or smooth plains, free from rocks, from which the Shephelah rises?[2] The sun shone very hot from a cloudless sky, though it was only the beginning of March, and the peasants were eagerly awaiting the latter rains, which in the East are necessary, before the long heat of summer, to fill out the ears of the corn, and swell the fruit, and thus have always been held so specially precious that in Proverbs we read of the favour of a king being "as a cloud of the latter rain."[3] Thus, also, Job describes the fervour with which his words had been listened to in the days of his prosperity by saying that his hearers opened their mouths wide for them, as for the latter rain.[4] If this supreme blessing fail, the earth becomes like copper for hardness, under a sun which shines down as a sphere of molten iron;[5] and the result is that there is little or no harvest. Most justly, the Hebrews regarded such a calamity as a punishment for their sins, and raised their cries to Him "who waters the furrows and moistens the ridges of the field, making it soft with showers, and blessing its fruit."[6] One could realise on broad, treeless uplands, without brooks or

[1] 2½d.
[2] 2 Chron. xxvi. 10 (Heb).
[3] Prov. xvi. 15.
[4] Job xxix. 23.
[5] Lev. xxvi. 19.
[6] Ps. lxv. 9.

springs, the yearning earnestness of the Psalmist after God when he says, "My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is."[1]

There are three words in Hebrew for the rains of different seasons, and these, very strikingly, are all found in one verse of Hosea.[2] "He will come unto us as the heavy winter rain,[3] as the latter rain[4] and the former rain[5] upon the earth"—come, that is, in fulness of blessing, like the triple rainfall that covers the earth with corn. In Joel, also, the three occur together. "He will cause to come down for you the heavy winter rain,[3] the early rain,[5] and the latter rain,[4] as in former times, and the floors shall be full of wheat."[6] The translation of the beautiful description of spring in Canticles[7] is not true to nature, in either the Revised Version or the Authorised, for the flowers appear on the earth, and the time of the singing of the birds comes, at least six weeks before the rain is over and gone. It is when the heavy winter rain[3] ceases, and the warm spring weather begins, that the flowers appear, the birds sing, and the voice of the turtle is heard, but it is precisely during this time that, at intervals, the latter rain[4] falls. It is of the heavy winter rain[3] that Genesis speaks in the story of the Flood, as continuing for forty days and forty nights, though rains alone would not have caused that awful catastrophe. In the same heavy winter storms[3] the people assembled by Ezra to take action respecting the mixed marriages which had prevailed, "sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of this matter, and for the great rain," so that, at last, they represented to the authorities that it was "a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand

[1] Ps. lxiii. 1. [2] Hos. vi. 3. [3] "Geshem" [4] "Malkosh." [5] "Yoreh" or "moreh." [6] Joel ii. 23. [7] Cant. ii. 11.

without," and on this ground, among others, were allowed to go home.[1]

The first, or early rain moistens the land, fitting it for the reception of seed, and is thus the signal for the commencement of ploughing. It generally begins in October or November, falling at intervals till December. The plentiful winter rains which soak the earth, fill the cisterns and pools, and replenish the springs, come, also at intervals, from the middle of December to March. The latter, or spring rain, which fills out the ears of corn, and enables it to withstand the drought before harvest, lasts, with bright days between, from the middle of March till the rains finally cease in April or May. From that time till the first rain of the late autumn, the sky is usually cloudless, and vegetation depends on the fertilising night-mist, the "dew" of our Bible, borne over the land from the Mediterranean during the night.

At Bureir, 230 feet above the sea, and about twelve miles in a straight line from Gaza, we halted, at one o'clock, for refreshment. The mud houses were built in clumps, if I may so speak, with a large open space between them, in which there was an old square wall round a large and deep well, with marble pillars from some ancient building, now wholly vanished, laid alongside, as a step up to the water, or a rest for water-pitchers, one of the pillars being hollowed out to form a trough. Mounds of grain, thickly covered with kneaded mud bricks, to keep out the rain and the vermin, rose here and there, and small herds of cattle dotted the pasture outside the village. A large mud-banked water-pond, with very muddy-looking contents, supplied the wants of the households, at least to some extent. Close to the houses was an underground cistern inside a wall of round stones, but it was now broken

[1] Ezra x. 9, 13.

and disused. This abandonment of such water-pits is inevitable, if the cement with which they are lined give way. They are, then, "broken cisterns, that can hold no water."[1] It is wonderful what a number of these subterranean reservoirs there are in the Holy Land. In Upper Galilee they honeycomb the ground in some places, and we have seen how they abound even so far south as below Beersheba. They are either hewn in the native rock or dug in the earth, and then built up with masonry; but the rock is often porous, so that the water passes through it and leaves them dry and useless for their original purpose. Narrowed at the top, so as to resemble a huge bottle, they are terrible prisons, if one fall into them, as sometimes happens, for it is impossible to get out unaided. It was in such a dungeon that Joseph was put, at Dothan, where cisterns are still to be seen—his prison, perhaps, among them; and it was in another that Jeremiah sat, amid the mire, in Jerusalem. Some are so large, as at Ramleh, that the roof is supported by pillars. The mouth is now, as of old, covered by one or more stone slabs, with a hole left in the middle for a rope, though when not wanted this hole also is closed with a heavy stone. Anciently, also, as now, full cisterns were often concealed by a covering of earth over the mouth, so that no one but their owner could find them. So, the Spouse, in Canticles, was "a fountain sealed" to all but him whom her soul loved: she was his alone.[2]

A second well, with a water-wheel, shows Bureir to be exceptionally favoured, one result being that there is a garden south of the village, while some palms and tamarisks shoot up among the houses. The slopes near showed, in one direction, rich brown ploughed land, as far as the eye could reach, camels and oxen being still busy

[1] Jer. ii. 13. [2] Cant. iv. 12.

adding to the tillage. A great flock of white sheep, belonging to tent Arabs, passed on its way to pasture; and in the circle of the landscape, besides the ploughed land and that which lay wild, thousands of acres were beautiful with the first green of barley and wheat. Spreading a mat below a rough cactus-hedge which gave some shadow, we sat down on the grassy edge of the road opposite the rain-tank, and comforted ourselves with some bread and hard eggs, washed down by a draught of delicious "leben," or sour goats' milk, brought by the Hajji from one of the houses. Some of the villagers were enjoying their midday rest in the shadow of a mud wall on the other side of the open village "green," which, however, was only dusty earth, their heads resting peacefully on stones for pillows, the thick windings of their turbans saving them from feeling the hardness. Just so, doubtless, was it that Jacob slept at Bethel.[1] His turban would help him to forget the stone, and, like the poor fellows before me, it would be nothing new for him to sleep in his clothes, for it is an Oriental custom to do so. All through Palestine the men in attendance on our tents lay down at night in the clothes they always wore, and I have no doubt they looked on me as supremely foolish for undressing. Among the ancient Hebrews a neighbour's raiment was not to be taken in pledge, or, at least, was to be given back by sunset, as that in which he slept.[2] A palm-leaf mat spread on the floor serves for a bed among the poor, or they lie on the bare earth; but, in the better houses, beds are made up on the divan, or seat, which runs along the wall in the best room: a framework of laths of palm, or a solid bank of clay, covered with cushions. Some rich houses have bedsteads, but they are not common. At Beit Jibrin I got thick quilted coverlets,

[1] Gen. xxviii. 11. [2] Exod. xxii. 27; Deut. xxiv 13.

of silk on the one side, in the sheikh's house; but whether they were to cover me, or for me to lie upon, I do not know. I used them for both purposes, as I had to stretch myself on the hard plaster floor.

The broad open plain, insensibly rising to the hills, opened to a great width as we approached Falujeh, in the afternoon. Unenclosed, it offered tempting pasture-ground to the gazelles which abounded in the uplands and kindly allowed me a sight of a small flock of them as I rode on. Graceful and fleet, they lent themselves readily to metaphor among the old Israelites, ever so attentive to the natural objects around them. The Arab word "gazelle" is not met with in our Bible, but there is no doubt that when "roebuck" occurs, the name of this graceful antelope should have been used. It was no use to chase them; the swiftest horse was left hopelessly behind. The Hebrews knew the creature well, and Solomon had it as one of the viands on his luxurious tables.[1] Asahel's fleetness is compared to that for which it is famous: "He was as light of foot as a gazelle in the open."[2] The men of Gad who swam the Jordan when it was in flood, to join David, are said to have had faces like lions, and to have been as swift as the gazelles on the mountains.[3] Babylon is called by Isaiah "the gazelle of kingdoms"[4] for its beauty; and, indeed, this comparison was a common one in the mouths of the prophets.[5] "My beloved," says Sulamith, in the Canticles, "is like a gazelle, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills."[6] Five times does she introduce this graceful creature in her song of love.[7] It is the commonest of all the large game in Palestine, and, in the south, is sometimes met with in herds of nearly a hundred. Nor is it

[1] 1 Kings iv. 23. [2] 2 Sam. ii. 18. [3] 1 Chron. xii. 8.
[4] Isa. xiii. 19. [5] Ezek. xx. 6, 15; xxv. 9; Dan. viii. 9; xi. 16, 41 (Heb.).
[6] Cant. ii. 8, 9. [7] Cant. ii. 7, 9, 17; iii. 5; viii. 14.

found only in the lonelier parts. Dr. Tristram saw a little troop feeding on the Mount of Olives, close to Jerusalem.[1]

The village boys were at play in the open centre of Falujeh—busy making dirt pies, and striving at a game of ball, just as Jerusalem, in old times, was full of boys and girls playing in the streets.[2] It is a moderate-sized place, with a rain-pond and two fine wells, at which one always sees women busy drawing water; and there was the usual sprinkling of idlers lying in the sun. It stands on flat ground, and there is a patch of garden on one side; but the people, as everywhere else, seem generally very poor. The flocks and herds, as I have said, belong, as a rule, to the Arabs, and the Government grinds the face of the peasantry with arbitrary taxation till they have barely a subsistence left. I am afraid, however, that it was very little better in Bible times, for there are no fewer than ten words for the poor in the Old Testament, and these occur, in all, about 260 times, while five words, besides, refer to poverty in some way.[3] In Deuteronomy we are told that "the poor shall never cease out of the land;"[4] and now the traveller finds it difficult to believe that there are any who are not poor beyond what Western people can imagine. The depopulation of the land, also, strikes the traveller very much as he passes through it. He frequently comes across an extensive landscape, in which he can only discern, here and there, a small village consisting of a few wretched mud huts.

Close to the village were some Arab tents, to which we turned, my friend proposing that we should visit them. They were of black camels'-hair cloth, which is quite soft,

[1] Tristram. *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 130.
[2] Zech. viii. 5.
[3] See *Englishman's Heb. Concordance*: "poor."
[4] Deut. xv. 11.

like coarse wool. A rude frame of short poles had been raised, in a very rickety way, and over this had been stretched the tent-cover, hanging down to the ground at the back and ends, and leaving the front open; the cloth which, at the will of the occupants, closed this part also, in storms or at other times, being thrown back on the roof. In shape, this strange dwelling was exactly like an open shed. The earth was its only floor. A small fire of wood smouldered in the centre, the smoke finding its own way out. In one corner—the right—was a pile of dried stalks, &c., for fuel; in the other were some arms—guns, pistols, and swords—hung from the poles, which, by the way, were not all of the same height or length, so that the back of the tent seemed broken. A carpet was brought from the women's apartment, which was simply a third of the tent, divided from the rest by a hanging cloth, and concealed in part by the curtain being let down in front. Just such must have been his mother Sarah's tent, into which Isaac brought Rebekah.[1] There were in all ten men in or about the tent: one was lying all his length on his back, on the ground, fast asleep in his clothes—a saddle his pillow; a black slave, with a gaudy "kefiyeh," was as much at home as anyone, and treated, apparently, on the same footing as the rest; the others were standing, sitting, or lounging about. Coffee-berries were presently brought out, and having been put into a rude stone mortar, were brayed with a piece of wood for a pestle, just as at times, only on a larger scale, wheat is crushed. It reminded me of the words in the Proverbs: "Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him."[2] The operation was carried out on the ground, for there was neither table, chair, nor stool. It appeared that these Arabs belonged to the tribe a member

[1] Gen. xxiv. 67. [2] Prov. xxvii. 22.

of which had committed the recent murder in Gaza, of which I have spoken,[1] and that they had pitched their tents close to the village in order to have what protection it afforded against a sudden attack from the tribe of the victim. All their flocks and herds were with them, so that they might enjoy the security yielded by the village street. A small cup of coffee, profuse salaams, and a very formal leave-taking, ended the visit, and we remounted our horses for Beit Jibrin.

The Arabs are, as a race, very ignorant and childish. None of them know how old they are, nor can they tell how long ago it may have been since any event in their history occurred, unless they chance to remember the number of harvests between then and now. As we rode slowly on I enjoyed some stories about them, gathered from the wide experience of my friend. A Bedouin, who lived with him in Gaza for a time, came one morning, radiant of countenance. "What has happened?" "Oh, my wife has a son!" By night, however, his happiness had passed into sadness. "What has happened?" "Ah, the boy has turned out to be a girl!" His wife's mother had been so frightened lest he should divorce her daughter for having a girl, that she had pretended it was a son. In another case a husband, anxious to be the father of a son, solemnly vowed that he would divorce his wife if she had a girl. Unfortunately, she had twin daughters. The poor fellow, however, really loved his wife, and racked his brains to get out of his oath. At last he solved the difficulty. "I said I would divorce her if she had a daughter, but not if she had two;" and so he kept her. How forcibly such incidents remind one of the words of Jeremiah: "Cursed be the man who brought tidings to thy father, saying, A man child is born unto

[1] See p. 166.

thee ; making him very glad ;" [1] or those of our Lord: "A woman hath sorrow, but as soon as she is delivered of the child she remembereth the sorrow no more, for joy that a man is born into the world." [2] Indeed, so proud is a husband of a son, that he is henceforth known only as "the father of Mahomet," or whatever be the name given to the child. We may from this imagine the eagerness with which Abraham and Sarah longed for an heir to their great possessions, and how great the trial of the patriarch's faith must have been when he was asked to offer as a sacrifice, with his own hand, the child at last given to him.

On one occasion, my friend and a German savant, travelling in Palestine, came to an Arab encampment, at which they were hospitably received. The German, however, took the notion of photographing the sons of the desert, and proceeded to get ready his apparatus. Knowing the ignorance and superstition of the race, his companion was alarmed, and begged him to desist, since the Bedouins might think he was working a charm for their hurt, in which case they would have no scruple in cutting their throats. Luckily the sheikh's son got them out of the dilemma. "Oh," said he, "that is a 'far-see-er'"—the Arab name for a telescope. "You will be able to look through it and see the mosques at Gaza"—which, by the way, was far below the horizon. Out the whole camp sallied, and sat down, looking at what was going on, so that an excellent photograph was obtained. This achieved, the company were invited to look through the camera. After a time the young wiseacre, who had been at Gaza and Joppa, where he had seen a telescope, came up, with no little fear, and putting his eye to the glass, shouted that he not only saw the mosques, but the muezzin on them, calling the faithful to prayers. Nor did he

[1] Jer. xx. 15. [2] John xvi. 21.

afterwards flinch. At Gaza he maintained to the governor, when that dignitary called at the house of my friend, that he could recognise the muezzin, for when he looked through the glass he saw his face!

The peasantry and the Bedouins have little love for each other—as little as the lamb and the wolf. The Bedouins, in fact, speak with the greatest contempt of the fellah, and a marriage between the two races is very rare. The desert which surrounds Palestine to the east and south is the true home of the tent tribes; but the temptation to seek better pasture lures small encampments to roam over all the outlying parts of the settled land. Thus we find them in many parts of the plains of Philistia and Sharon, and on the hills of the Shephelah. Old sites appear to have a special charm for these fragments of once-powerful tribes. The vales of Sharon are one of their favourite haunts; but on the plains they have learned to use the plough and pay taxes, which, of course, degrades them in the eyes of their brethren of the desert. They do not, however, live in houses, but in tents, and look on the dwellers in the mud cottages as infinitely beneath them. As of old, when the Midianites overran the best of the land, the desert tribes are constantly on the look-out for a chance to invade the country in force, and are only kept back by the presence of Turkish soldiery. When war calls these away, the wave of barbarism at once advances; the commons of the villages are overrun, and blackmail is extorted wherever possible. It is not many years since the whole plain of Esdraelon was covered with the tents of the Eastern Arabs from the desert, who had come to harry the land, and even hold it, if possible, and who were only driven back by a strong Turkish force.

It is striking to see how exactly modern Arab life illustrates that of the patriarchal age. In passing an

Arab encampment you may see some elder of the tribe sitting, as Abraham did, in the shade of the open side of his tent, in the heat of the day,[1] and you may very possibly be entreated by him to take advantage of the coolness he is enjoying, and may get water poured over your feet, if you accept the invitation; some quickly-cooked meal being presently ordered to be set before you. The same grave courtesy at meeting will be seen now as then; the slave will pour the water on your feet from much the same kind of long-spouted copper vessel, as you hold them over a metal basin of a pattern that has not, perhaps, changed for millenniums. The sheikh will hurry to his wife in "the woman's tent,"[2] and tell her, as the queen of the encampment, to "make ready, quickly, some measures of fine meal," that is, the finest and purest she has; and she will, herself, take her kneading-trough and prepare the dough, while some slave-girl kindles a fire of grass or stalks, on which to lay the iron plate for baking. Or the mistress may, perhaps, prefer to light the fire over a small bed of stones and heat them, so that her thin cakes may be baked upon them after the fire is swept off, just as the cake of Elijah was "baken on the hot stones;"[3] or in her haste she may cover them with the hot ashes, to quicken the baking, as the Hebrew text seems to imply was done by Sarah. It would, indeed, take very little time, in any case, to prepare such thin "scones" as Arabs still use. You could hardly expect, however, that the same honour would be done you as was shown to guests so illustrious as those of Abraham. An Arab very rarely kills a calf, as the patriarch did; it needs a great occasion to call for such an unusual liberality. You may count on a chicken, or a male kid—for female kids are carefully preserved; but a

[1] Gen. xviii. 2—12. [2] Gen. xviii. 6 (Heb.). [3] 1 Kings xix. 6 (Heb.).

calf is only for some very eminent guest. Repentant Israel could not more earnestly promise fervent gratitude for the forgiveness they implored than by saying they would render the calves of their lips[1]—the best they could give —the most thankful and heartfelt acknowledgments. Nor could the father of the prodigal son better show the yearning love he felt towards his restored child than by calling aloud to kill even the fatted calf, to greet his return.[2] If special guests arrive, an Arab sheikh will even now kill a calf, as Abraham did, in their honour; himself, like the patriarch, running to the herd to fetch it. The same rapidity in dressing it will be shown: the fowl, the kid, or part of the calf which you have just seen alive, will be served up in, perhaps, half an hour. It has always been the rule, as in the time of St. Peter, that killing and eating[3] follow each other without any considerable interval. You still, like the guests of Abraham,[4] get curdled milk or "leben," with milk fresh from the goat as the beverage at your meal, and you still sit on the floor and dip your hand into a common dish,[5] set in the middle, between all the company, using pieces of your thin bread for spoons, to raise to the mouth the gravy of the stew, or, it may be, the mixture of meat and rice. Abraham's tent was always, when possible, pitched under the shade of a tree, just as the tents of the Arabs are now, where trees can be found. At Shechem and at Hebron[6] he sought the shadow of an oak; at Beersheba he planted a tamarisk-grove, to get shade as soon as the plants had grown.[7] And just as Abraham "stood by" his guests under the tree, and waited on them, so the sheikh, your entertainer, stands beside you

[1] Hos. xiv. 2; lit. *bullocks.* [2] Luke xv. 23. [3] Acts x. 13.
[4] Gen. xviii. 8; for "butter," read as in text.
[5] Matt. xxvi. 23; Mark xiv. 20; John xiii. 26.
[6] Gen. xii. 6, xiii. 18; for "plain," read "oak."
[7] Gen. xxi. 33.

to-day; his wife, like Sarah, close at hand, but hidden behind the curtain of the women's part of the tent, watching all that is going on.

When there is no dried grass or other light natural fuel, the Arab uses dried camels'-dung, as the Tartars do, or cakes of cow-dung, made by the women.[1] Abraham's encampment must have consisted of a great many tents, with a population of from 2,000 to 3,000 persons, young and old, since there were 318 young men trained to arms, belonging, by birth, to the patriarch's tribe, and the number of his male and female slaves, bought, or born to slave parents, seems to have been large.[2] He would doubtless, therefore, arrange his camp in some special form, for the protection of his flocks, which must have been very great; most probably in a circle, as large Arab encampments are pitched now, that the herds and flocks may be driven into the central space at night. The Arabs call such camps "dowars," and they are mentioned in the Old Testament under the name of Hazerim, or Hazeroth, though these words are also applied to villages in the usual sense. In many cases, however, they must mean Arab tent encampments, as where we read of the "towns" of the sons of Ishmael, and their "castles," which should really be, their "tent-villages and encampments."[3] "The Avim," a race of aboriginal inhabitants in Palestine, are said to have dwelt in Hazerim, even to Gaza;[4] and we read of the Hazerim that "Kedar [an Arab tribe] doth inhabit."[5]

An Arab tent has no furniture, as I have said, in the men's part; the part sacred to the women is the larder, kitchen, and store-house. A copper pot or two, kettles, and frying-pans; wooden bowls, for milking the flocks and

[1] See *ante*, pp. 122, 155.
[2] Gen. xii. 5; for "gotten," read "bought;" xii. 16; xiii. 5, 8; xiv. 14.
[3] Gen. xxv. 16. [4] Deut. ii. 23. [5] Isa. xlii. 11.

herds, water-jars and skin bottles, a pair or two of hand-mill-stones, and a wooden mortar, constitute the principal household property. The skin bottles, indeed, are a special domestic treasure, as they serve all purposes. Milk, as we have seen, is churned in them, by pressing and wringing them, a custom to which Proverbs alludes when it says, "Surely the churning [wringing] of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood."[1] These skin bottles are of all sizes, according as they are made from the skin of kids, he-goats, cattle, or camels. When a goat or other animal is killed, its feet and head are cut off, for Orientals never eat a beast's head, and the skin is drawn off without opening the body. The holes where the legs were are duly sewed up, when the skin has been dried or rudely tanned with acacia-bark; the neck being left as the mouth. I have seen huge "bottles" made of an ox-skin; two of them, full of oil, a load for a camel. The outside is laboriously soaked with grease, to keep them soft, and to make them hold their liquid contents. One meets with them constantly in the East. The water-seller carries a huge skin on his back, the mouth below one arm, ready for opening. Milk, water, everything by turns, is carried in them. Hung up in the smoky tent, they get dry, and black with soot: a fit image of a mourner, with face darkened and saddened by affliction or fasting. Hence it was natural for the Psalmist, in a time of great sorrow, to cry out that he was become "like a bottle in the smoke."[2] These bottles have been in use from the earliest times, for Hagar went away with her son from his father's tents bearing a skin of water on her shoulder.[3] And the Gibeonites overreached the plain soldier Joshua, and passed themselves off as ambassadors from some far-away nation, by appearing before him with

[1] Prov. xxx. 33. [2] Ps. cxix. 83. [3] Gen. xxi. 14.

old sacks on their asses, looking as if worn out in carrying provender from a distant country; with old wine-skins, shrivelled in the sun, rent, patched, and bound up; with dry and mouldy bread in their wallets; and wearing ragged clothes and old clouted sandals.[1] When a skin bottle gets old and rends, the hole is covered with a patch, or sewed together, or even closed by inserting a flat piece of wood; but care must be taken, if it is not ere long to trouble the heart of its owner. An old wine-skin naturally becomes thin and tender, and is unfit to stand the violent fermentation of new wine. Hence, as our Lord says, "Men do not put new wine into old bottles, else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish; but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved."[2] But, at the best, skin bottles are poor substitutes for those of more solid materials. When exposed to the sun on a journey, they must be constantly greased, else the water in them will soon evaporate; and their contents so often turn bad that one name for them comes from this fact.[3] It is a curious illustration of the Oriental character of Bible imagery that these strange-looking things supply Job with a metaphor for the clouds, when he asks, "Who can empty out the skin bottles of heaven?"[4]

As the reader has already seen, the dress of the Bedouins is simple. A long shirt, sometimes white, generally blue, reaches to the ankles, and is kept to the person by a leathern strap or girdle round the waist. As it is partly open above this, a great pocket is thus formed, down to the girdle; and in this pocket is stowed whatever the wearer wishes to carry easily. As, moreover, the dress is

[1] Josh. ix. 4.

[2] Matt. ix. 17

[3] "Hameth," from "hamath," to be spoiled, foul, rancid, as water, butter, &c.

[4] Job xxxvi.i. 37 (Heb.).

very loose, he can easily pull it far enough through the girdle to make an overhanging bag in which to carry grain or anything else he chooses. It is to this that our Saviour refers when He says, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom For with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured t you withal."[1] These words, by the way, need the explana tion as to the "measure," &c., which the custom still prevalent in the East affords. When grain is bought after harvest, for winter use, it is delivered in sacks, and the quantity in these is always tested by a professional measurer. Sitting down on the ground, of course cross-legged, this functionary shovels the wheat or barley into the measure, which is called a "timneh," using his hands to do so. When it is quite full, he shakes the "timneh" smartly, that the grain may settle; then fills it to the brim again, and twists it half round, with a swift jerk, as it lies on the ground, repeating both processes till it is once more full to the top. This done, he presses the contents with his hands, to fill up any still vacant space, till at last, when it will hold no more, he raises a cone on the top, stopping when it begins to run over at the sides; and this only is thought to be good measure. A skilful measurer can thus make the "timneh" hold nearly twelve pounds more than it would if simply filled at once, without shaking or pressing.

Among the Arabs neither men nor women wear drawers, and by the villagers among whom they move, they are ridiculed as "going naked." But if we may judge from the strictness of the command that the priests should wear drawers, this seems to have been the practice among the Hebrews also. No priests were to enter the

[1] Luke vi. 38; Matt. vii. 2; Mark iv. 24.

tabernacle without linen drawers, "lest they die."[1] When on a journey, or engaged in shepherding, the Arab generally wears an "abba," loosely hung on his shoulders, and this is commonly his only covering by night.[2] During the burning heat, moreover, it often serves to give welcome shade, when spread out on the top of sticks. A bright silk or cotton kerchief (the "kefiyeh"), square, but folded crosswise, is used to cover the head, and, with a double turn of soft camels'-hair rope round it to keep it in its place, as already described, is the best possible head-gear for such a climate. Many have skull-caps below, but not a few use the "kefiyeh" only. The feet are generally bare, unless a pair of red leather slippers can be stolen from some traveller, or bought in a border town. These are literally made of the same "rams' skins, dyed red," that were used as one of the coverings of the tabernacle.[3] There is no pretence of fitting, and it must be quite an art to keep them on, as they have no backs, and are generally much too large. The poorer Arabs often make themselves sandals of camels' skin—mere soles, secured by thongs passed round the ankle; just such substitutes for shoes as were worn by the ancient Hebrews.[4] Very poor Arabs, however—and they are many—have only one article of clothing, the loose blue-and-white cotton shirt, generally the worse for wear.

Arabs are, as all know, divided into tribes, which, like the Scotch clans, take their names from their earliest head. As there are in North Britain, Macgregors and Macdonalds —that is, sons of Gregor or of Donald—there are, in the desert, Beni Shammar, the sons of Shammar, and many other tribes, similarly called after their first ancestor. The

[1] Exod. xxviii. 42, 43. [2] Exod. xxii. 26, 27. [3] Exod. xxvi. 14.
[4] Exod. iii. 5; Deut. xxv. 9; xxix. 5; Josh. v. 15; Ruth v. 7, 8; 1 Kings ii. 5

aristocratic families of a tribe marry only in a very limited circle, to keep their wealth and influence in as few hands as possible. But the blue-blooded husbands make up for this by marrying several wives, leaving the supreme rank for the one of purest descent, who has the honour of giving out the provisions of the household, and of preparing the meals for her husband and his guests: a prerogative which was ceded as a matter of course to Sarah, when Abraham entertained the angels, and was proudly accepted by her. If the husband, as is sometimes done, accept from a childless wife the gift of one of her female slaves, as a wife of inferior rank, in the hope that the latter may have a child whom her mistress may adopt, the child, until adopted and formally declared free, is, like its mother, a slave, and the property of the wife, and can be sold or driven out as she pleases, the husband, according to Arab custom, being helpless. Hagar and Ishmael were in this way the slaves of Sarah, and she was within her right when she demanded the expulsion of both from the encampment.[1]

The authority of a father is supreme in the desert household. The life and property of all its members are in his hands, though he may rarely exercise his stern prerogatives. But by this immemorial family law Abraham was free to kill his son Isaac, and, had he actually done so, would have felt no sense of guilt, for Isaac was his to kill, if he thought good. The same frightful usage extended, moreover, to neighbouring races, for the King of Moab, in the exercise of his right, offered his eldest son on the town wall as a burnt-offering, to obtain the favour of his god; and even two Jewish kings, Ahaz and Manasseh, caused, not one child, but several, "to pass through the fire"—that is, burnt them alive. as a sacrifice

[1] Gen. xxi. 10.

to Moloch.[1] But this was in distinct contravention of the law of Moses.[2] It was not, however, till almost the last days of the Jewish kingdom that Josiah finally "defiled Topheth, in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Moloch."[3]

[1] 2 Chron. xxviii. 3; xxxiii. 6. [2] Lev. xviii. 21; Deut. xviii. 10.
[3] 2 Kings xxiii. 10.

CHAPTER XIV.

FALUJEH TO BEIT JIBRIN.—THE ROAD THENCE TO HEBRON.

The plain east and north of Falujeh stretches unbroken for miles. Half-way to the hills we passed on our right the village of Arak, on the top of a hill 578 feet high, and then reached Zeita, about the same height above the sea, at the entrance to the hill-region. It was only a poor hamlet, as indeed was Arak, but there were no other communities for miles around; the country, rich as it was, lay without population. Relics of better days were to be seen, however, even in such paltry collections of hovels. Herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, belonging to the Arabs, fed on the common. Finely-built cisterns marked every ancient site or modern hamlet, often with marble pillars lying round, their sides grooved with the well-ropes of hundreds of years. Fragments of tesselated pavements, Corinthian capitals, stone channels connecting wells with plastered stone tanks—built, who knows how long ago?—spoke of a very different state of things from the present. In one place, a colony of sparrows had taken possession of an ancient dry cistern, and chirped lustily. The sides of a wady, here and there, showed pieces of ancient walls, built strongly across the valley, to check the rush of the winter torrents, and save them for irrigation; but all was now in ruins. Little girls at the village rain-pond, flying about with dirty faces and streaming hair; boys playing

round, or bathing in the pond; women drawing water from it for the household; all alike, women and children, with no clothing but a longer or shorter smock; men lounging on the village dust-heap, their favourite place of assembly—were the ever-recurring sights at each widely-separated cluster of mud huts.

Beit Jibrin lies in a valley, approached by a steep track over bare sheets of rock, loose stones, boulders, and every variety of roughness. It had grown quite dark before we reached the beginning of the long descent, so that there was nothing for it but to let my horse have its own way, over, round, or between the stones and bare rocks, as it chose. A false step might have thrown me over the side of the hill, I knew not into what abyss. Such a ride brings before one, as perhaps nothing else could, the force of the Bible promises that the people of God will be kept from sliding and falling; and the terribleness of the threats that the workers of iniquity shall be set in slippery places, and that their feet shall slide in due time.[1] I could realise what Jeremiah said of the wicked of his days, that "their way should be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness."[2] At last, however, we reached Beit Jibrin, a village of 900 or 1,000 inhabitants. But here a new trouble awaited us. The men with the tents had not arrived. We went hither and thither in search of them, but it was of no use; they had evidently taken some other road, and had stayed for the night where darkness overtook them. Nothing was left for us but to seek shelter in the sheikh's house, a huge, rough building, constructed of stones taken from the ruins of the ancient castle of the town, a massive wreck, near which we had alighted from our horses. The way to the house was as dark as midnight,

[1] Prov. iii. 23; Jer. xxxi. 9; Deut. xxxii. 35.

[2] Jer. xxiii. 12. See also Ps. xxxv. 6; lxxiii. 18.

and full of turnings, past dust-heaps, decayed mud hovels, sunken courtyards, and much else, which covered the slope, while fierce dogs barked and snarled on every side, just as they "compassed" the Psalmist long ago.[1] It needed my own stick and that of my friend to protect us from these savage brutes. Quiet by day, they make a fierce noise at night, as in the old Hebrew villages.[2]

At last we reached the sheikh's house, to which a large patched and broken gate, standing open, gave entrance, under a rough arch. An old pillar lay across the threshold, requiring one to make a high step to get over it—a matter all the more difficult as there was no light inside, while the ground was uneven and thick with dry mud and manure. Walking on under the arch for twenty or thirty feet, a chamber, with a wall up to the entrance-arch, opened to the left—a large place, lighted by only one small lamp, high up, at the far end. The floor was raised about two feet, excepting a horse-shoe space, which was unpaved. On the ground in the middle of this glimmered a wood fire, round which sat fifteen or twenty men on rude benches and stones, some smoking, others gazing idly at the embers. On the daïs, at the head of this oblong pit, stood the great man, who, with all the rest, rose to receive us, beckoning to me and my friend to sit down on a small carpet and some cushions, at his side. It was a repetition of the experience of Job in his prosperity. "When I prepared my seat in the street, the aged arose and stood up."[3] When we sat down, they did the same. Opposite me, along the wall of the daïs, sat a number of men, and just before the sheikh squatted a Turkish soldier, in blue and white, with a "kefiyeh" on his head. We had chanced to come on a "town-council" meeting, the subject being worthy of the place. The

[1] Ps. xxii. 16. [2] Ps. lix. 6. See *ante*, pp. 11, 12. [3] Job xxix. 7.

Governor of Jerusalem had sent two soldiers to arrest one or more offenders at Beit Jibrin, and this gathering of the elders had been summoned to arrange with these military bailiffs what they would accept in the way of bribe to go back and say they could not find the men they sought. My friend found this out as we sat listening.

The town has an evil name, its population of well-grown, muscular men, who are thus very different from the peasants of other parts, being bold and insolent, though industrious, as a whole, and comparatively well-to-do. The father of the sheikh at whose side I sat had been a ruffian of the worst kind, the terror of the neighbourhood and of the townsmen. Tales of monstrous crimes committed by him were rife. It is said that if he heard of a man having married a handsome wife, he would invite the two to his house, and if he fancied the girl, would stab the husband on the spot, and make the widow marry him forthwith. Till his death no traveller dared visit Beit Jibrin, and the traders from Hebron could not venture to come near it with their goods. The Turks, however, have brought down the pride of the house since his death, for the family are now much reduced, as the ruinous condition of parts of the rough mansion showed.

After a while it was time to rest, and we proceeded to our room. Led out to the roofless, earth-floored entrance, we mounted a terribly rickety stair, the carpentry of which may have dated, for its rudeness, from any time since the Flood, to a plaster-floored chamber, with an open hole in one corner, over the yard, large enough to be a peril to any baby. This was the discharge-gap for refuse from this particular room. On the way up-stairs, I could see into the place I had left, where the men were sitting; the wall next the court being built up only to the spring

of the arches on which the second storey rested. A high outer wall enclosed the court, making it part of the mansion, and the stair to my dormitory clung, on one side, to this; but, though the wall ran up thus, there was no roof; the court was open to the sky. A narrow passage projecting from the side of our room faced the court: a mere shaky bridge of rough wood, leading to the women's apartments, which looked out on the high wall. Half the space apparently occupied by the house, as seen from the outside, was thus really a yard, only the front and one side having a roof, which, of course, was flat. Our room was arched, or rather, four arches met in the centre, overhead, as in the "council chamber," below us. Two pairs of old mill-stones lay in one corner; one of them, the lower, in a wooden tray with edges as high as the top of the stone, to catch the flour. A thin carpet, the size of a large hearthrug, and a quilted coverlet, large enough to cover one person, were the only furniture. Ere long, however, the colporteur, who seemed quite at home, brought me a pillow of red cloth, on seeing me lie down quite worn out, and this was supplemented a little later by two thick quilts as mattresses, for my companion and myself, and a thin quilt for bedclothes. The door, of sycamore, may have been of any age, so clumsy and primitive was it. One of its hinges was gone, but it could be closed after a fashion, with the help of two men to lift it. To shut it exactly was, however, an impossible feat. The only bolt was a rough cut of a thick branch, which we propped against the door, but only to see it knocked down, soon afterwards, by some intruder. There were two windows, without glass, but with lattices, the openings between the laths being of the size of small panes. The windows were closed by shutters of half-inch wood, one of them kept in its place by a great piece of timber

laid against it. As to their fitting the window-spaces, no such idea had troubled the genius who made them. You could see through the gaping chinks in pretty nearly every direction. A small recess in the wall was lighted by a little tin paraffin lamp, with no glass: a dismal affair, giving a light like that of a tallow candle, and spreading a rich perfume round.

To get any supper was the difficulty. Nothing whatever was offered by our host. After a time I managed to secure a little hot water, and infused some compressed tea, in a small tin. We had sugar, but no milk; bread, made at Gaza, in flat "bannocks;" some hard-boiled eggs, and, I believe, the wreck of a cold chicken. There was no table, no chair, no anything; so we sat on the floor and did our best. Then came the almost hopeless attempt to sleep. One of the many wolf-like, long-muzzled, yellow town dogs, prowling through the open gateway, had wandered up to us, and, smelling the food, darted into the room, knocking down our ingenious prop behind the gaping door. The colporteur, however, was a match for him. My long-legged friend had composed himself to sleep with his back against the wall, and his lower members stretched out far across the floor, but he gathered them up in a moment, and, with a volley of fierce Arabic, drove the quadruped at a gallop down the rickety outside stair; then settled down at the same right angle as before, for his night's enjoyment. As to myself, sleep danced round my pillow, but would not do me the kindness of mesmerising my tired brain. Indeed, it would have been hard to get into oblivion, in any case, under the fierce attacks of regiments, brigades, and army-corps of fleas which presently marched or leaped over me, like the myriad Lilliputians over Gulliver. What a night! I never spent such another, I think, except once, twenty-five years ago, when I bivouacked on the

shore of Lake Huron, on a missionary visit to the Indians with my excellent friend, now Vicar of Ogbourne St. George's, in Wiltshire. The sand-flies and mosquitoes there were even worse than the hosts of fleas at Beit Jibrin, for they bit Mr. Pyne's nose till it was a great deal thicker at the bridge than at the nostrils; inverted it, in fact, as to shape. Morning, however, broke at last; we had no clothes to put on, for we had not undressed; the women were already astir, carrying brushwood to their room, for firing; children came and looked in on us; breakfast was easily made on the scraps of last night's feast, and we gladly sought the open air, to take a survey of the town and neighbourhood. Arab hospitality had done very little in our case.

Beit Jibrin is thought by Dr. Tristram to be the successor of ancient Gath; by others, to be that of the old city of Eleutheropolis or Bethogabra, "the House of Gabriel." The ancient name, Beit Jibrin—"the House of Giants"—now restored to it, seems to point to the survivors of the race to which Goliath belonged, as being once settled here, and we know that they lived in Gath. Conder, however, as we have seen, believes Tell es Safieh to have been the ancient Philistine city, but which opinion is right must, I fear, be left to others for future discussion. At the foot of the rising ground on which the sheikh's mansion stood are the remains of a great fortress, with tremendous walls, still cased, in parts, with squared stones, and, in places, thirty-two lengths of my foot thick. There is nothing in Palestine so extensive and massive, except the substructions of the ancient Temple at Jerusalem, or the Mosque at Hebron. A ruined wall of large squared stones, laid on each other without mortar, encloses the fortress at a good distance; a row of ancient massive vaults, with fine round arches, running along, inside, on

the west and north-west, many of them buried in rubbish, but some still serving as houses. The space thus shut in, to form the ancient castle-yard, is about 600 feet square; the fortress itself being a square of 195 feet, and showing the magnificent architecture of the Crusaders. Beyond the enclosure, remains of the town wall, or fortifications, extend, in all, to about 2,000 feet, with a ditch in front: a defence strong enough, in all its parts, one would have thought, to keep out the Saracens for ever, as indeed it would have done had the Crusaders been united among themselves.

Outside the walls are three wells: two with water, one dry: the masonry apparently Crusading, though both they and the fortress have been patched up in later times, the last repairs seeming to have been made, if we may judge from an inscription, about 300 years ago. Since then everything has fallen to ruin, the very enclosure of the castle, where the rubbish allows, being used for mud hovels, or for patches of tobacco or vegetables. One of the wells, of great size, and probably 100 feet deep, full to overflowing after rain, is of itself enough to show what the place might be made under a good government. Ornaments on the marble capitals found here and there show that Beit Jibrin has had a long, eventful history, one of them exhibiting such purely Jewish devices as the seven-branched candlestick: a relic, probably, of Maccabæan times.

The fortifications of Beit Jibrin are not, however, so remarkable as the artificial caverns found in its neighbourhood. There are fourteen in all, rudely circular, and connected together; their diameter from twenty to sixty feet, and their height from twenty to thirty. Crosses are cut on the walls of all the caves, and early Arabic inscriptions, of which one is the name of Saladin. In some of the

caverns there are also many niches for lamps; in others, rows of larger niches, probably for urns containing the ashes of the dead after cremation. There are, besides, spaces cut for bodies, marking the change from burning to burial. Altogether, the caverns are very remarkable, but it is hard to form any safe judgment either as to their origin or the purpose for which they were first used. They are about a mile south of the town, in a hill which is completely honeycombed with them. You enter by a perpendicular shaft in the hill-side, into which you have to creep after your guide, letting yourself down as he directs. Candles for light, and a cord to show the way back, are necessary. Pressing through the briars and loose pieces of stone at the mouth, you reach the bottom after a time, and then lighting your candles, creep on all fours along a winding passage, to the bottom of a circular dome-shaped cavern, about sixty feet high, and solid at the top. A flight of stone steps winding round the sides leads, about half-way up, by a twisting tunnel, through which it is again necessary to creep, to another cavern; but there are smaller chambers on the way, and passages branch off in all directions in a perfect maze. To visit all these strange caves would be a difficult, and indeed almost impossible, task; but one or two are a fair sample of all.

In their present size and condition they are evidently of comparatively late origin; but the fact that many Jewish tombs have been more or less destroyed in enlarging them shows that they must, in their earlier state, be at least as old as the time when the Hebrews ruled over this district, in the Maccabæan age, or earlier. The entrances are sometimes at the top, sometimes at the bottom; and there is no provision for lighting. Nor are they in any measure on the same level: bottoms and tops alike go up and down

without plan or regularity. That they were intended for tombs is impossible; but they may have been a vast system of underground reservoirs of water to provide against the contingencies of a siege, all the caverns being, as I have said, connected. That there are no openings at the top of most of them seems, however, to militate against such a theory in these particular excavations, though there are others to which it may apply. Were they originally caves of the Horites, who lived in such excavations in the rocks as these must originally have been; or are they a counterpart of the subterranean cities still to be found in some regions east of the Jordan?[1] Consul-General Wetzstein and Herr Schumacher are, so far as I know, the only persons who have fully explored one of these subterranean cities, and as the narrative of the former is much more vividly written than that of his fellow-countryman, I quote it:—

"I visited old Edrei—the subterranean labyrinthine residence of King Og—on the east side of the Zamle hills. Two sons of the sheikh of the village—one fourteen, the other sixteen years of age—accompanied me. We took with us a box of matches and two candles. After we had gone down the slope for some time, we came to a dozen rooms which, at present, are used as goat-stalls and store-rooms for straw. The passage became gradually smaller, until at last we were compelled to lie down flat, and creep along. This extremely difficult and uncomfortable process lasted for about eight minutes, when we were obliged to jump down a steep wall, several feet in height. Here I noticed that the younger of my two attendants had remained behind, being afraid to follow us; but probably it

[1] Wetzstein, *Reisebericht über Haurân*, ii. 47, 48; Schumacher, *Across the Jordan*, p. 136.

was more from fear of the unknown European than of the dark and winding passages before us.

"We now found ourselves in a broad street, which had dwellings on both sides of it, whose height and width left nothing to be desired. The temperature was mild, the air free from unpleasant odours, and I felt not the smallest difficulty in breathing. Further along, there were several cross-streets, and my guide called my attention to a hole in the ceiling for air, like three others which I afterwards saw, (now) closed up from above. Soon after, we came to a market-place; where, for a long distance, on both sides of a pretty broad street, there were numerous shops in the walls, exactly in the style of the shops that are seen in Syrian cities. After a while we turned into a side-street, where a great hall, whose roof was supported by four pillars, attracted my attention. The roof, or ceiling, was formed of a single slab of jasper, perfectly smooth, and of immense size, in which I could not perceive the slightest crack. The rooms, for the most part, had no supports; the doors were often made of a single square stone; and here and there I also noticed fallen columns. After we had passed several cross-alleys or streets, and before we had reached the middle of this subterranean city, my attendant's light went out. As he was lighting again by mine, it occurred to me that possibly both our lights might be put out, and I asked the boy if he had any matches. 'No,' he replied, 'my brother has them.' 'Could you find your way back if the lights were put out?' 'Impossible,' he replied. For a moment I began to be alarmed at this under-world, and urged an immediate return. Without much difficulty we got back to the market-place, and from there the youngster knew the way well enough. Thus, after a sojourn of more than an hour and a half in this labyrinth, I greeted the light of day."

No wonder that it needed swarms of hornets to drive the population out of such a stronghold as this, and bring them within reach of the swords of the Hebrews.[1]

The caverns of Beit Jibrin are certainly very inferior to such a city, but they may represent a different stage of civilisation. A great proportion of the inhabitants of the Haurân still live in caves, and I have already described a cave-village near Beersheba.

Half-way between the caverns and the town is an interesting ruin, the Church of St. Anne, one of the finest Byzantine churches in Palestine. The path to it runs south, across the fine valley from which rises the low hill on which Beit Jibrin stands. Many olive-trees in avenues shade the way towards the gentle acclivity, shutting in the town on the south; the town, by the way, is quite surrounded with hills of sufficient elevation to conceal it from view till their crest is reached. On the road I learned that here also, as in other parts of Southern Judæa, and in most districts of the Turkish Empire, men frequently mutilate themselves, that they may be unfit for military service, which they profoundly dread, from its carrying them so far from home. One man was pointed out to me who had hacked off his thumb to escape conscription, inflicting on himself voluntarily the injury to which, in Joshua's time, seventy local chiefs had been subjected by a ferocious Canaanite kinglet, to make them incapable of holding the sword or the spear, and thus quite powerless for war.[2] To strengthen the empire, it is a custom with the Sultan to send recruits to distant countries; Arabs, perhaps, being sent to guard Constantinople, while Turks, or Kurds, garrison Palestine. The soldiers I saw the night before proved to be Kurds. The blinding of an eye is more frequent than the cutting off

[1] Ex. xxiii. 28; Deut. vii. 20; Josh. xxiv. 12. [2] Judg. i. 7.

of a thumb, some burning liquid being used for the purpose; but the sight of both eyes is often lost in the process.

The Church of St. Anne stands half-way up the slope, and at once carries the thoughts back to the old Byzantine times, though it has been restored by the Frank Crusaders in the Gothic style, perhaps when far gone in decay. The east end is still perfect, and there are a few courses above the foundation along the whole nave, which extended to a length of 124 feet, with a width of thirty-two feet, while the breadth of the church, as shown by remains of the walls, was 154 feet; so that the building was, originally, not far from square. Two tiers of windows, five feet broad, ran along the sides, and at the east end was a semi-circular projection, or apse, in which were three windows. The height of the apse had originally been forty-three feet, but a piece of the roof of the nave is ten feet lower, so that a dome or other construction must have been used to join the two. It is touching to see such a ruin in a land now given up to Mahommedanism. The conquests of the Cross have shrunk as well as expanded. Countries once Christian are so no longer. The crescent has taken the place of the Cross all over the East, and along the southern shores of the Mediterranean. Let the West carry back the standard of our faith to these once Christian lands!

Between the Church of St. Anne and Beit Jibrin there are many more caverns, but, unlike the others, all are more or less open at the top. In some cases, a circular hole still exists, about six feet in diameter, such as one might expect in cisterns; and of others portions of the roofs have fallen in. Many Christian symbols cut out of the soft rock on the sides of these strange vaults show that the region was once zealous for the Cross, and carry the

date of the caverns back to an age at least earlier than the invasion of the Saracens. But how much earlier, who can tell? The sides have been dressed with picks diagonally, and great pillars of rock have, in some cases, been left to support the roof. It is touching to find that in some cases there are recesses at the east side, as if these subterranean halls, so rude and strange in their lofty circular hollow, had been used as chapels—"caves of the earth," where the friends of the Saviour often met together. They may, however, as Dr. Thomson suggests, have been used in earlier times as reservoirs for water in case of a siege, so that the city, which he thinks was identical with Gath, should never be taken because of a failure of the supply. This theory is strengthened by the fact that at Zikrin, six miles north-west of Beit Jibrin, there are vast excavations beneath a platform of hard rock which is pierced by forty openings into the reservoirs below, whence water is even now drawn daily by the villagers. The excavations at Zikrin closely resemble those of Beit Jibrin, both in shape and size, and are all connected by passages, so that the water stands at the same level in each.[1]

Carpet-weaving is followed extensively in Beit Jibrin. On the flat tops of the mud houses, women engaged in this industry were busy at the most primitive looms, with their fingers for shuttles, producing work at once firm and thick in its substance. Wilton and Axminster would be horrified if set to rival them and restricted to the use of such appliances; but the East does wonders under amazing difficulties. Outside the town, long strips of ground beside the paths were used by the yarn-makers and dyers in preparing the threads before handing them to the dusky weavers. There were a good many flocks and herds, and the shepherds were all armed, both with guns and axes,

[1] *Land and Book*, p. 566.

to protect their charge from the wolves, which plunder the folds in the hills, as the Bedouins do those in the plains. One shepherd-boy was lamenting, with tears, that a wolf from one of the caves had just carried off a kid.

The sheikh, as I have remarked, has been so thoroughly humbled by the Turks since his hateful father's death that he is now quite poor. His hereditary authority, however, retains for him great formal respect from those who approach him, which they do kneeling on one knee, and kissing his hand. His equals do not seem to pay this form of homage, but only the humbler people. So, the Son of Sirach tells us, "till he hath received, the borrower will kiss a man's hand."[1] Such formal kissing is common in the East. They kiss the beard, the mouth, and even the clothes. Niebuhr, on one occasion, was allowed, as a great honour, to kiss both the back and the palm of an Arab Ymrâm, and also the hem of his clothing; and kings, in Bible times, required conquered chiefs or princes to kiss their feet, or, as the prophet expresses it, to "lick up the dust from them."[2] It was, therefore, unconsciously, a nobly symbolical acknowledgment of lowly reverence to our Lord, as her King, when the poor sinful but penitent woman came behind Him and kissed His feet, after having washed off the dust with her tears.[3] The sheikh's castle or mansion has apparently belonged for centuries to the same family, which is one of the highest in the country, its chief holding the hereditary dignity of sheikh over sixteen villages of this region, in return for which he is required, if necessary, to supply the Government with 2,000 soldiers ready for war. The brother of our host ruled at Tell es Safieh.

[1] Ecclus. xxix. 5. [2] Isa. xlix. 23; so in Ps. lxxii. 9.
[3] Luke vii. 45.

The view from the hill, south-west of the Church of St. Anne, was striking. Its top is a flat plain, about 600 feet across; but as it is nearly 1,100 feet above the sea, the great Philistine plain lay spread out at our feet on the west, a blue strip of the Great Sea shutting in the horizon. To the east rose the mountains of Hebron. South-west and east the hills were strewn with ruins of many places, of which the very names have long ago perished. Tombs and cisterns in the white chalk were numerous. Less than half a mile on the south-west a ruined heap, on the top of gently-sloping hills, marks the site of Mareshah, where King Asa defeated Zera, the Ethiopian King, who brought against him an army of a hundred thousand men and three hundred chariots.[1]

As the asses with our tents had not even now come, we were forced to start for Hebron without them. The road lay through a beautiful plain, girt in by gentle hills, here and there stony, elsewhere green with olives or grain, or showing yellow ploughed land. Carved stones lay around, among them a Corinthian capital, half buried in the grass. Pits were open in several places, for digging out dressed stones of ancient buildings. A marble pillar was built into a water-trough; and a mound of earth showed, by a slip of the soil at one part, that it was all masonry underneath. There must have been a great population here in Jewish times, if only from the vast number of Hebrew tombs in the plain and in the hills. The two soldiers who had caused such a commotion in the sheikh's dovecot the night before, were returning to Hebron, and formed our improvised escort. One—the Kurd—had on a blue military jacket, trimmed with orange and blue braid; the other wore an old grey coat, pink-and-blue striped cotton tunic, big

[1] 2 Chron. xiv. 9.

boots, and sword. The first had on his head a fez, the second a flowing "kefiyeh." As to the men they were sent to bring back, their answer to the governor was ready: "They won't come, and we can't fetch them;" but their pockets told the true reason.

The valley was lovely as we rode on. Fences of squared stones from the ruins divided the fields of different owners. Rows of beautiful olive-trees, patches of green barley, lentils, beans, and wheat, diversified the plain, through which a small dry water-course, with green slopes, wound its way. The white limestone cropped out at places on the hill-sides, along which were numerous marks of ancient terrace cultivation. Smoke, at more than one point, showed where charcoal-burners were at work, using the stunted bushes and dwarf-trees of some of the hills as material. A poor fellah passed, with his wife and children and all his household goods—some pots and miserable "traps"—on a camel, which he led. They were removing from one part to another.

The road soon began to change as we got higher, for the whole way to Hebron is an ascent. The valley became often very stony and barren, till one wondered, when a plough was seen slowly moving through such fields of ballast, whether the land could be worth the labour of cultivation. As we approached the famous hill of Judæa the slopes were covered with olives, grey stone gleaming out amidst them. Soon, however—not more, indeed, than two hours after the time we started, 8 a.m.—the route became desolate in the extreme. One ravine succeeded another, and the path was a chaos of stones, over which it seemed next to impossible for horses to travel. But by dint of winding about, stepping high, and almost climbing, they did contrive to make way, which they certainly could not have done had they not been born in the land. Only

here and there was the semblance of a track to be discerned. The hills on each side of the valley we were ascending were grey as a chalk cliff, but set off with thickets of myrtle, low thorny bushes, and various shrubs. Stone dams ran across the wady and formed terraces, by which the soil brought down by the rains was prevented from being swept away, and spread out into small fields or patches. Dam after dam thus paved successive terraces with fertile earth, which was green with crops. The wady had now shrunk to very narrow limits, being only a stone's-throw across; the hills, grey and barren except for the myrtles and bushes, slanted up steeply, on either side, to their rounded tops. About noon we came, at last, to water, at a spot which seemed the picture of desolation, but for the artificial shelves of verdure secured by dams, which now reappeared, after a long interval of hideous desolation. We were on the old Roman road; but it had not been repaired for 1,500 years. I should think, indeed, that it must have been only a few feet broad at first, and certainly one would not now dream that it had ever been a road, were it not for odd traces at wide intervals.

The soldiers had kept ahead of us up this wild defile, which, by the way, has in all ages been the only high road, awful as it is, between Hebron, Beit Jibrin, and Gaza. Having at last reached a spot where water burst out of the rocks on the left, they stopped, and we gladly did the same. A peasant had raised a miserable house for himself at the side of the wady, above the reach of the torrent that sweeps downward after rain, and had fenced in a few yards with a stone wall, and planted some fig-trees, which were in full leaf. The path was on the other side of the dry water-course, but it needed good management to get across the few yards of rocky shelves and boulders to the spring. Once safely over, the horses were allowed to graze

as they could on patches of grass in the wady where the water of the spring reached, and in the shadow of the rocks[1] we sought what shelter was to be had from the burning sun. One of the soldiers, meanwhile, betook himself to the very opposite occupation of washing his face and his "abba," of course without soap. We sought what refreshment was procurable from a cup of cold tea, a hard egg, some dry bread, and a little watercress, gathered below the spring, which leaped out of the bare hill-side like a full stream from a large hose. The road from Jerusalem strikes into this wady at its worst part, and if this be the route taken by St. Philip the Evangelist when he fell in with the eunuch, I don't wonder at the statement that it was "desert."[2]

When fairly rested, we set out once more, the road continuing much the same, but the weariness of it relieved by wild songs from the soldiers—the subjects known only to themselves. I was greatly refreshed by a cup of cold water brought me by one of them before starting; its coolness at such a time forcibly reminding me of the value set by the Saviour on such a gift bestowed on His little ones in these very hills of Palestine, so hot and dry in their chalky greyness.[3] At some places there was a little fertility, and we even found some peasants ploughing on an artificial terrace in the wady, while other spots were ploughed at its sides where, for a time, it grew wider. The ploughers had left their overcoats at home, as was noticed of those in His day by our Lord,[4] and they followed their ploughs with eager joy, preparing for summer crops. Two oxen dragged one plough; another was pulled along by an ox and an ass, in vivid contravention of the old Hebrew law.[5] Sometimes even an ass and a camel are yoked together to

[1] Isa. xxxii. 2. [2] Acts viii. 26. [3] Matt. x. 42; Mark ix. 41.
[4] Matt. xxiv. 18. [5] Deut. xxii. 10.

this task—a union sufficiently comical. Black goats, on the steep sides of the ravine, were feeding on the gnarled dwarf-oak scrub, a few feet high, the dwarf-pistachio and arbutus, with tufts of aromatic herbs, some especially fragrant beds of thyme, myrtle-bushes, and the like, which were springing out of the countless fissures of the rocks. Such a region was, in fact, a paradise for goats, which delight in leaves and twigs, and care little for grass. Their milk in every form—sour, sweet, thick, thin, warm, or cold—forms, with eggs and bread, the main food of the people, a state of things illustrating very strikingly the words of Proverbs: "Thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for maintenance for their maidens." [1] Shepherds, with long flint-guns, were watching the flocks.

There could be no hunting-ground for robbers more suitable than these lonely hills, and it was well for us that we had the soldiers in our company. As we advanced, the path led over a broad desolate plateau, the watershed of the district; streams moving on one side towards the east, and on the other towards the west. Gradually descending, we reached, at last, the wide skirt of vineyards which borders Hebron for miles. The ground was very stony, but had been cleared partly to get materials for walls five or six feet thick, which were in every direction; and partly to form paths, a few feet broad, between these ramparts. The name for such walls, in Palestine, is "yedars;" the Hebrew counterpart of which, "gadair," often occurs in the Old Testament. Thus Balaam is said to have been riding in just such a narrow "path between vineyards, with a 'gadair' on this side, and a 'gadair' on that side," [2] so that it was no wonder the ass crushed his foot against one of them. Ezra uses the "gadair" as a symbol of the

[1] Prov. xxvii. 27. [2] Num. xxii. 24.

peaceful enjoyment of the land, when he thanks God for having given his people "a 'gadair' in Judah and Jerusalem.[1]" These rough constructions of dry, unmortared stones of all sizes are the fences of gardens, orchards, vineyards, sheepfolds, and all other enclosures, and are therefore employed as a symbol of rural life. Such masses of loose stones, however, are not so stable as they look. Rising gradually, after each clearing of the surface inside, to a height of from four to six feet, they readily give way, more or less, if one attempt to climb them, while the swelling of the ground by rain oftens throws them off the perpendicular, or they bulge out in the middle from the pressure of the mass of stones against an ill-built portion of the outer coating. At Hebron, I came frequently upon a "gadair" which, from some of these causes, had rushed in promiscuous ruin into the path, and left hardly any space to get past its confused heaps. The Psalmist, therefore, used a telling illustration of the ruin awaiting his enemies when he said, "as a bowing wall shall ye be, and as a tottering 'gadair.'"[2] Of the vineyard of Israel, the Northern Kingdom, the inspired writer of the 80th Psalm cries, "Why hast thou then [O God] broken down her 'gadairs,' so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the 'yaar' doth waste it, and the wild beast of the open country doth devour it."[3] Ezekiel compares the lying prophets of his day to the foxes or jackals which hid in the gaps of the "gadair" of Israel, helping to throw them down, when it should have been the duty of true men to repair them, that Israel might stand safely behind them in the day of battle.[4] With a like familiar knowledge of these structures, Ecclesiastes tells us that "whoso breaketh a 'gadair,' a serpent shall

[1] Ezra ix. 9. [2] Ps. lxii. 3. [3] Ps. lxxx. 13; see also Isa. v. 5.
[4] Ezek. xiii. 4, 5; see also xxii. 30.

bite him;"[1] many kinds of serpents delighting in the crevices of such open walls as their lurking-place. The sheepfold of loose stones, so common in many parts of the country, is called a "gedairah," a feminine form of "gadair," so that we can understand what the tribes beyond the Jordan meant when they said, "We will build 'gideroth' for the flocks."[2] They had stone in their territory, while the shepherds of the stoneless plains do not use this word, but substitute for it another.

[1] Eccles. x. 8. See *ante*, p. 246. [2] Num. xxxii. 16.

CHAPTER XV.

HEBRON.

The vineyards of Palestine disappoint those who have poetical ideas of spreading branches and hanging clusters. The vines are planted in wide rows, and are simply so many single stems, bent at a sharp angle with the ground, and cut off when four or five feet long, the end being supported by a short forked stick, so that the shoots may hang clear of the soil. A vineyard is as prosaic a matter at Hebron as on the Rhine; the vines looking like so many dirty sticks, with a few leaves on the shoots from the top or sides. There are towers for the "keepers of the vineyards;"[1] stone buildings, of no great size, by which a look-out can be kept on all sides; there is also a shelter for the husbandmen, the vineyards in many parts being far from any village. In Canticles, Sulamith has the task of caretaker assigned to her,[2] so that women, at times, did this duty among the ancient Hebrews; but it is a hard and menial task, exposing one to the fierce sun, which, in Sulamith's case, burned her "black."[3] In most cases, the protection for the watcher is only a rude wooden hut, covered with boughs, so that Job could say of the frailness and instability of the hopes of the wicked, "He buildeth his house as a moth, and as a booth that the

[1] Cant. i. 6.

[2] The word for "keeper" in this case is feminine.

[3] Cant. i. 6. See *ante*, p. 233.

keeper maketh,"[1] and Isaiah could compare Jerusalem, made desolate by war, to a "booth in a vineyard."[2] The watchmen employed are generally armed with a club, and are very faithful, often risking their lives in the protection of the property they are set to guard. But it is not always easy to get men to undertake the task, since it not only involves danger, but requires wakefulness through the whole night, making even the most loyal weary for the light. It is to this that the Psalmist refers when he says that "his soul looketh out for the Lord, more than watchmen [or keepers] for the morning."[3] To guard against drowsiness and to frighten away thieves, they call out from time to time through the darkness: a practice to which the prophet refers when he describes the Chaldæans as encamped round Jerusalem, and calling out like keepers of a field.[4] Cain insolently asks, "Am I my brother's keeper?"[5] So it is said that "the Lord keepeth all the bones of the righteous, not one of them is broken; He keepeth the souls of His saints; He keepeth the simple;" and, unlike keepers among men, "He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps."[6]

The wine of Hebron is still famous, and is very cheap, a bottle costing about sixpence. On the hill-side, among the vineyards, an ancient wine-press fortunately stood near the road, so that I was able to inspect it at leisure. It consisted of two troughs, hewn out of the rock, one higher than the other, and both well cemented on the sides and at the bottom. The grapes are cast into the upper one, and trodden with the feet, so that the juice flows out into the lower; the old practice, so often introduced in Scripture, being followed at this day. The

[1] Job xxvii. 18. [2] Isa. i. 8 (Heb.). [3] Ps. cxxx. 6.
[4] Jer. iv. 16. [5] Gen. iv. 9.
[6] Ps. xxxiv. 20; xcvii. 10; cxvi. 6; cxxi. 4

length of the trough was only about four feet, and it was not quite two feet broad, and very shallow. The treading of the grapes is left to the poor, as in Job's day, when the lawless rich "took away the sheep from the hungry, who make oil within their walls, and tread their wine-presses, and suffer thirst."[1] The vintage, however, was always, as it still is, a time of general gladness, merry songs accompanying it at times, while, as in all joint work among Orientals, the labourers encourage each other by shouts. Hence, even now, a period of national trouble, such as war, could not be more vividly painted than in the words of Isaiah, that "in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither joyful noise; no treader shall tread out wine in the presses; the vintage shout shall cease."[2] "The shouting," says Jeremiah, in a similar passage, "shall be no shouting;"[3] no shout of joy, but the shout of battle. The jubilant exultation when the ruddy grape was yielding its wine was, in those days, apparently, even more ardent and clamorous than now, for the same prophet compares it to the cry of an attacking host, telling us that Jehovah will give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth.[4] The presses are generally large enough for several treaders to crush the grapes in them at once, and to this circumstance, as will be remembered, there is an indirect allusion in the awful picture of Him who is mighty to save returning from the destruction of His enemies. The treading of them down is like the treading out of the blood of the wine-fat, but He had trodden it alone; He trod them (by Himself) in His "fury," and as the person and clothing of the treaders are stained with the red juice, so, He says, "their life-blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I

[1] Job xxiv. 11.
[2] Isa. xvi. 10.
[3] Jer. xlviii. 33.
[4] Jer. xxv. 30.

have stained all My raiment:"[1] words spoken in answer to the question of the prophet, "Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel, and Thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?"[2]

The vine has been cultivated in Palestine from the earliest times, and during the Hebrew period flourished everywhere over the land. Palestine is, indeed, peculiarly fitted for the grape, its sunny limestone slopes, through which the rains quickly percolate, leaving a dry subsoil. The heat by day and the heavy mists by night make it the very home in which the plant delights. Hence, long before the time of Moses, it was not only a land "flowing with milk and honey," but also famous for its wine, as we read in the annals of Thothmes III., of Egypt, who reigned 1,600 years before Christ.[3] With the green and silver olive, and the dark-green fig-tree, the vine was the characteristic glory of the hill-country.[4] Every hill-side was covered with vineyards, terrace above terrace, while wine-presses and vats were in great numbers hewn in the rocks. Especially famous were the vineyards of Engedi, "the Fountain of the Kid," by the Dead Sea,[5] where, on the hill-sides north of the spring, the terraces on which they were situated are still as perfect as in Bible times; large rock-hewn, carefully-cemented cisterns, also, still remaining on each terrace, with a network of cemented pipes running from them in all directions, to bear water to the root of each vine. But the grape has long since vanished from that locality. Hebron, still famous above all other parts of the land for its vines, had a great name for them in the earliest times. The men of

[1] Isa. lxiii. 2, 3 (R.V.). [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Records of the Past*, ii. 44.

[4] Gen. xlix. 11; Deut. vi. 11; viii. 8; Num. xvi. 14; Josh. xxiv. 13; 1 Sam. viii. 14; Jer. xxxix. 10; 2 Kings xxv. 12; Neh. v. 3.

[5] Cant. i. 14.

the valley of Shechem used to go out, in the time of the Judges, and gather their vineyards, and tread the grapes, and hold merry meetings over the vine-harvest.[1] The vineyards of Shiloh were equally flourishing.[2] Uzziah drew part of his revenue from his vines at Carmel;[3] and the vineyard of Naboth, at Jezreel, is only too sadly commemorated.[4] Outside Palestine, Lebanon yielded wine which was greatly praised,[5] and the vines of north Moab, especially those of the now unknown Sibmah, were in very high repute,[6] as were also those of Helbon, near Damascus,[7] which are still highly esteemed. On the Lake of Galilee, Josephus tells us, the plain of Gennesareth, warm as Egypt, yielded grapes for ten months in the year,[8] which one can hardly realise when he looks at it now, bearing nothing more valuable than thistles. So general, indeed, was the diffusion of the vine that, as we have seen, even the now desolate valleys south of Beersheba show long swathes of stone heaps, over which vines grew in ancient times. Eshcol, from which the spies brought the wonderful cluster, must, in fact, have been in that region: not, as often supposed, near Hebron; for Israel, as has been noticed, was then encamped at Kadesh, and the prize must have been found comparatively near that place, since the spies could not have dared to carry it for any distance through a hostile and alarmed population[9] Kadesh, however, lay just to the east of the grape-mound region, and could easily be reached with the precious burden without notice being attracted, the desert lying near the valley that yielded it. Yet Eshcol does not appear to have grown finer grapes than southern Judæa, to the north

[1] Judg. ix. 27.
[2] Judg. xxi. 20.
[3] 2 Chron. xxvi. 10.
[4] 1 Kings xxi. 1.
[5] Cant. viii. 11; Hos. xiv. 7.
[6] Isa. xvi. 8—10; Jer. xlviii. 32, 33.
[7] Ezek. xxvii. 18.
[8] Jos. *Bell. Jud.*, iii. 10, 8.
[9] See *ante*, p. 260.

of it, if we may judge from the dying blessing of Jacob, which paints Judah as "washing its garments in wine, and its clothes in the blood of the grape."[1]

A vineyard needs to be carefully fenced, to keep sheep, goats, or cattle from eating it down; and hence the "gadair," or loose stone wall, round it, is constantly mentioned, as are the clearing off of the loose surface stones, and the building of a tower in it, and the hewing out of a wine-press,[2] which are still necessary, as of old. Private malignity, in ancient as in modern times, might be tempted to let flocks or herds into an enemy's vineyard; but against this the law made provision, by enacting that if a man shall cause a vineyard to be eaten, "of the best of his own vineyard shall he make restitution."[3] After the vintage, however, the owner, even now, turns in his own beasts to browse; and when the vines are pruned, in the spring, the trimmings are carefully gathered as forage. The jackal, which differs from the fox in liking fruit as well as flesh, is a foe to the vine-grower in every part of the country, and in Lebanon the wild boar sometimes breaks through and does much damage—"the boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast doth devour it."[4] The foxes—that is, the jackals—still need to be "taken," as much as when the Beloved, in Canticles, longed for their capture.[5]

Though vineyards, as has been said, are prosaic-looking enough, I found at Damascus and elsewhere, trained over lattice-work in the courtyards of houses, or against the walls, some vines which were more in keeping with our preconceived ideas, since they covered a broad space or adorned the whole breadth of a dwelling, as it is clear they

[1] Gen. xlix. 11.
[2] Isa. v. 2; Ps. lxxx. 12; Matt. xxi. 33; Mark xii. 1.
[3] Ex. xxii. 5. [4] Ps. lxxx. 13. [5] Cant. ii. 15.

must have done also, in some cases, in Bible times, from the comparison of the mother of a large and beautiful family to a "fruitful vine by the sides of a house."[1] In vineyards, however, the vines are rigorously pruned back each year, only three or four shoots being left at the top of the short black stem, as in the time of our Lord: "Every branch that beareth fruit, the husbandman purgeth"—that is, prunes—"that it may bring forth more fruit."[2]

Grapes are sold in Jerusalem as early as the end of July, but the regular grape-harvest does not begin, even in warm situations, till the opening of September, and in colder positions it continues till the end of October, while the sowing-time for corn is in November. Thus, when there is a rich grape-harvest, and an early fall of the first rains, the image of plenty pictured by Amos is realised: "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed."[3] It is not uncommon to find a vine trained over a fig-tree in a garden, for the shade it affords, as in old times, when it was a favourite image of peaceful security that a man should be able to sit "under his vine and under his fig-tree," and no one should make him afraid.[4] This may mean either a trellised vine, shading the court of the house, or a fig-tree growing near, or the two growing together.

Red grapes were grown much more than green, and thus the wine in common use readily supplied our Lord, on the occasion of the Last Supper, with an emblem of His blood shed for the salvation of mankind;[5] hence, too, we so often read of the "blood" of the grape.[6] At present, however, at Hebron and Bethlehem, green grapes

[1] Ps. cxxviii. 3. [2] John xv. 2; Isa. v. 6. [3] Amos ix. 13.
[4] Mic. iv. 4; Zech. iii. 10; 1 Kings iv. 25; 1 Macc. xiv. 12.
[5] Matt. xxvi. 28. [6] Isa. lxiii. 3, 6: Ecclus. xxxix. 26.

are grown almost exclusively, and it may also have been so in olden times. Indeed, it is quite possible that the famous cluster from Eshcol was green, as this variety is still famous for its huge berries and clusters, many of the latter being three pounds in weight, while they occasionally reach from nine to twelve.

Wine-presses cut in the rocks are found in nearly every part of the country, and are the only sure relics we have of the old days of Israel before the Captivity. Between Hebron and Beersheba they are found on all the hill-slopes; they abound in Southern Judæa; they are no less common in the many valleys of Carmel, and they are numerous in Galilee. With such an abundance, it was natural that there should be liberality; and hence the law permitted the traveller to eat at his will as he passed, though he was not to carry off any grapes in a vessel.[1] In the same spirit the right of gleaning was legally reserved to the poor.[2]

The use of wine having been prohibited by Mahomet, the vine is not now much cultivated in Palestine; the products of the grape are, however, to be found in every market. Raisins are still dried, as they were in Southern Judæa when Abigail, among other gifts, carried a hundred bunches of them to make peace with David.[3] They must also have been seen on the fruit-stalls in all the Israelitish cities and towns, as they are frequently mentioned in Scripture[4]—sometimes, indeed, when readers of the English would not suspect it, for the word translated "flagons of wine" in several passages should really be rendered "cakes of raisins."[5] The ancient Hebrews likewise used

[1] Deut. xxiii. 24.
[2] Lev. xix. 10; Deut. xxiv. 21.
[3] 1 Sam. xxv. 18.
[4] 1 Sam. xxx. 12; 1 Chron. xii. 40; 2 Sam. xvi. 1.
[5] 2 Sam. vi. 19; 1 Chron. xvi. 3; Cant. ii. 5; Hos. iii. 1.

the syrup of grapes, or "dibs," which, with raisins, is the only product a Mahommedan takes from his vineyard. It is made by boiling down the juice of ripe grapes to a third of its bulk, thus making it like treacle, though of a lighter colour. It was, perhaps, used in Bible times, as it is now, either in making sweetmeats, or mixed with water, to be eaten with bread. It is called "honey" in Scripture,[1] so that in many passages it is impossible to tell whether the honey of bees, or this syrup, is intended It would seem, however, that that which Jacob sent with spices, &c., to the great man in Egypt was "dibs," and not bees' honey, and that it was "dibs" which Ezekiel speaks of as being sent largely to Tyre.[2]

It was the custom in ancient times, as it still is in the East, to mix spices and other ingredients with wine, to give it a special flavour, or make it stronger, or the reverse. This is the "strong drink" of which Isaiah speaks,[3] and the "spiced wine" of the Canticles,[4] and it is likewise the wine which Wisdom "mingled," and to which she invites the wise; but it is also that "mixed wine" to look on which, the Book of Proverbs tells us, is to bring on oneself woe;[5] and it is to this that the awful verse refers, "In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is *full of mixture.*"[6] Another kind of wine, generally translated "vinegar" in our version, also in the Revised Version, is the common sour wine used by the poor. It was this into which Ruth was to dip her bread as she sat beside the reapers.[7] In all probability, moreover, it was this which was offered to our Saviour on the cross,[8] since it was part of the daily allowance of a Roman soldier, and

[1] "Debash."
[2] Gen. xliii. 11; Ezek. xxvii. 17.
[3] Isa. v. 22.
[4] Cant. viii. 2.
[5] Prov. ix. 5; xxiii. 30.
[6] Ps. lxxv. 8.
[7] Ruth ii. 14.
[8] Matt. xxvii. 48.

was given, not in derision, but in pity, to quench His thirst or dull His agony, the soldiers having more sympathy with Him than the priests or the Jewish people. When Isaiah speaks of "wine on the lees, well refined" as part of the great feast in the day of the triumph of God's people, he alludes to the custom of leaving new wine for a time on its lees, after fermentation, to improve its strength and colour. It being thus left, all impurities settle, and it is drawn off clear and bright.[1] Palestine in our day is a very sober country, a drunken person being very seldom seen; but I fear as much could not be said for olden times, since drunkenness is mentioned, either metaphorically or literally, more than seventy times in the Bible.

The road from Beit Jibrin to Hebron has few places of historical importance in its long, dreary ascent; but it is otherwise with that from Adullam, which lies about fifteen miles north of Hebron, in a straight line—nearly the same distance as the road we came. I have already spoken of the number of ruin-covered sites on the other side of Adullam; they are equally numerous as you ride southward. Indeed, Captain Conder reckons that there are three in every two square miles; so dense was the population in early times. Hebron lies over 2,000 feet higher than Beit Jibrin; but though Adullam is on a higher level than Beit Jibrin, the road from it to Hebron is a continual ascent also. The Hill of Adullam is in a region of caves, which, in some of the valleys, are still inhabited by veritable cave-dwellers, like those in the south. To the north-west, beyond the hills, lie the charming olive-groves through which we passed before. On the other side of these the road winds, roughly enough, up a confusion of small glens—hollows green with corn in spring—though the peasants who have planted it are nowhere to be seen, as

[1] Isa. xxv. 6.

they live in distant villages. On every side are stony hills, bright with cyclamen and anemone, but without a human habitation. From Adullam the road leads up the Wady es Sur, which is the upper part of the valley of Elah, consecrated to the memory of Samson and David. Traces of a road older than the Roman period show themselves in the broad valley, as we ascend it, past Keilah and Hareth, where it shrinks into a mere gully, amidst steep, bare hills, through and up which the path is fit for goats rather than for horses. A bare plateau is at last reached, like that met with in coming from Beit Jibrin, and the track soon begins to descend, about 300 feet, to reach Hebron. The hills, in fact, are about that height above the ancient town, by both approaches. Bare rocks, tracts of brushwood, and stretches of meagre pasture gradually give place to vineyards and orchards, and we ride on longing to see Abraham's city, but doomed to be disappointed till the last moment, for only then does it come in sight.

A mile from Hebron, on a slope to the right of the narrow, stony path, between vineyards and their great loose "gadairs," stands the Russian hospice, built to provide accommodation for the pilgrims of the Greek Church, who flock to Hebron in great numbers each year to visit Jutta, the reputed birth-place of St. John the Baptist, which is a few miles off. It is a large, flat-roofed, stone building, and must be a great blessing to the poor wanderers from the wide regions of the Russian Empire. Just before it stands a magnificent old evergreen holm oak, which is venerated as the very tree under which Abraham's tent was pitched at Mamre. But it is easier to make this assertion than to prove it; for it is quite certain that this particular tree, though it has been worshipped for at least 300 years as "Abraham's Oak," is only of yesterday com-

pared with the long ages since the patriarch's day. Moreover, it is not destined to continue very much longer an object of veneration, as it is growing old, and has lost more than half its branches during the last twenty-five years. Still, it looks vigorous in parts, though some of its boughs are apparently dead; and perhaps it may yet weather some generations. At the ground its trunk measures thirty-two feet in circumference, and at the height of about twenty feet it divides into a number of huge limbs—some vigorous, some dry and leafless—spreading out to a distance of about ninety-five steps round. Josephus tells us that the Tree of Abraham stood three-quarters of a mile from Hebron, and was a very great and very ancient terebinth; but in the fourth century a similar tree was shown two miles *north* of Hebron as that of the patriarch. It is hard, therefore, to decide which is the true spot, though the Russian hospice, I fear, enjoys only an apocryphal glory from its great oak. The vines on the slope were partly lying along the ground, and partly propped on low forked sticks; the soil of one vineyard was well cleared of stones and weeds, while that of another was rough and foul. The stems of the vines were on an average six to eight inches round, with shoots thick enough, at times, for such sceptres as Ezekiel tells us could be made from the "strong rods" of the vine of Israel.[1] From my own experience I could once and again repeat, as my horse stumbled on over the stone-heaped path, the words of Proverbs[2]: "I went by the vineyard of the man void of understanding, and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down." This vineyard, indeed, lay well-nigh across the whole path, in a steep slope. A spring ran at the side of the road,

[1] Ezek. xix. 11. [2] Prov. xxiv. 30, 31.

from below a small canopy, as we approached Hebron, making the borders of its channel bright with grass and flowers.

At last we rode down a slope between stone walls, interrupted by a few two-storey stone houses at the sides of a broader road, figs and olives filling most of the space on either hand, and, turning sharply to the right, were before one of the gates of Kiriath Arba, as the ancient Hebron was once called. This old name probably meant "the City of Arba," some old Canaanite hero; but it was explained by the Jews as meaning "the City of Four"—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Adam, who were all alleged to have been buried here—Arba standing for "four" in Hebrew. The Arabs of to-day call the city El-Khalil—"the Friend"—in memory of the universally-honoured patriarch Abraham, "the friend of God."[1] The gate was a solid building, blocking up the street, with an arch for entrance. Loungers sat on the low walls leading to it; women and men were busy drawing water from a stone-covered well with steps, just before it, the stone mouth deeply furrowed by the ropes of centuries; and on the other side of the left wall lay one of the pools of Hebron, over which, perhaps, nearly 3,000 years ago, men saw hung up the hands and feet of the murderers of Ishbosheth, Saul's son, who were slain by order of David.[2] A strip of olive-trees lay behind, on each side, a very suitable spot for pitching our tents upon, but unfortunately they had not come. Happily for us, however, the German medical missionary, who lived close to the gate, kindly invited us to stay with him, so that we had the luxury of a house instead of the wretchedness of canvas. Having rested and taken some refreshment, it was necessary to make inquiries about our missing asses, and for this purpose we had to go to the governor's quarters.

[1] James ii. 23. [2] 2 Sam. iv. 12.

The streets were filthy beyond description, and some of them were sunk in the middle, for cattle and beasts of burden, as some of those in Jerusalem still are, and as all, probably, once were. At last we reached the house of the commanding officer for Southern Palestine, who is governor of the town. The room into which we were conducted was furnished with a cushioned divan, or sofa, on one side, and a lower seat on another. The German medical man who had come with us sat down on this, cross-legged; the great man motioned my friend and me to the higher seat of honour. First, however, came the salutation of my friend, who, being known to the governor, was kissed by him on both cheeks, his beard stroked, and his knee patted after he had sat down. So Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand, to kiss him,[1] though with treacherous designs not entertained by the governor. The chamber was carpeted, and there was some pretence to neatness in the decoration of the walls; but the approach to the house, and even the entrance, were like a wynd in Sunderland or Edinburgh; indeed, not half so respectable as such places are now, for no slum in the East-End of London can be imagined so offensive. Coffee and cigarettes were of course handed round, and the subject of our visit broached. Nothing could be more courteous than the governor's bearing. "He would instantly send soldiers off after the asses." The man who brought the coffee took the order; a sergeant presently appeared, and the patrol was off on horseback within a few minutes.

Many of the streets through which we passed are arched like tunnels, with dwellings over them, out of sight, the approaches being through the dens which serve as shops. A wall three feet high and two broad, running in front of these, forms a counter on which the tradesman

[1] 2 Sam. xx. 9.

exposes his goods for sale, he himself often taking his seat, cross-legged, among them. The shops were only small recesses, without any light except from the front, and very little coming even from that direction, for the street in many parts was nothing more than a long stone archway: a delightful place for an unscrupulous shopkeeper, for no one can see defects. The Jewish quarter has gates, which are shut at night, and so with the other parts of the town. In the Jewish district the filth was simply distressing.

Our greeting in the governor's house was only a sample of what was to be seen when any neighbours happened to meet, for the greatest care is taken to observe every detail of conventional good manners. When two men meet they lay the right hand on the heart, then raise it to the brow, or the mouth, and only after this take hold of each other's right hand. Then follows a string of sounding words, expressive of intense mutual interest in each other's fathers, grandfathers, and ancestry generally, with numberless other inquiries before they bid good day and pass on. The insincerity of such protracted greetings, the waste of time, and above all the distraction from the mission of the disciples which would inevitably arise, sufficiently explain our Lord's command to His messengers to "salute no man by the way."[1] An Oriental cannot forbear from a long gossip as often as he stops, and is delighted with nothing so much as mixing himself up with the settlement of any business transaction which he may casually encounter on his journey. The directions not to carry either purse, scrip, shoes, or staff,[2] were as strange to Eastern habits as the forbidding of salutations. When journeying any distance from home, the Oriental puts some of the thin leathery bread of the country, some dried figs, a

[1] Luke x. 4. [2] Matt. x. 9, 10; Mark vi. 8; Luke ix. 3; x. 4; xxii. 35.

few olives, and perhaps a little cheese, into his "scrip" or "wallet"—a leather bag made of the whole skin of a kid—which hangs from his shoulders, and with this simple fare, and some water from a fountain, he satisfies his hunger and thirst. In Christ's day, however, an additional motive led the Jews to carry with them this "scrip" filled with eatables legally "clean." On every side they were among heathen — or among Samaritans, which they thought almost worse—and to taste food prepared by persons so utterly "unclean" was defilement. Hence each individual of the thousands whom our Lord twice miraculously fed had a "basket," which was just this scrip, that he might always avoid what had been prepared by anyone who was not a Jew. This "basket," indeed, was so invariable a part of a Jew's outfit, wherever he was found, that Juvenal, the Roman satirist, notices it as familiar in Italy.[1] That the disciples were not to take this inseparable accompaniment of their countrymen with them was a deadly blow at the Levitical purism of the day, only to be compared, in our own times, with an injunction by a Brahmin to his disciples no longer to pay attention to caste, though hitherto it has been their supreme concern. To take no money with them threw these first missionaries directly on the good feeling of those to whom they were sent: a more likely means, surely, of awaking personal interest, and opening a way for the Gospel, than if they had borne themselves independently, as those who made at least their living by their office, and could pay for their sustenance. They were to go forth with empty girdles—that is, penniless, the girdle being still the purse of the Oriental; it was to be their trust that love would beget love, as it always does, and they were to show that they sought the sheep rather than the fleece. Nor were they to encumber them-

[1] Juv. *Sat.*, iii. 14; vi. 541; see also Wahl, *Clavis*, 278 b.

selves in any way. They were to show by their poverty that they believed what they preached when they said that their kingdom was not of this world; and that they were fired by an enthusiasm which threw aside every encumbrance, and trusted to their heavenly Father for daily bread and friendly aid.

Some of the streets of Hebron were shielded from the sun by straw or palm mats. The fruit market was especially good. There were piles of oranges from Joppa, of dates from Egypt, of raisins and figs grown in Hebron itself, as well as in other places. Besides these, glass-ware formed one of the chief articles for sale; Hebron having once enjoyed almost a monopoly of vitreous productions in the markets of Egypt and Syria, and still filling those of Jerusalem and other towns with them. Many camel-loads of glass bracelets and rings are sent to Jerusalem at Easter, and they seem to be the sole articles sold by some large establishments near the Holy Sepulchre. The glass-works in which these trinkets, so peculiar to Hebron, are made seem strange to Western eyes, for they consist of only a low, miserable, earth-floored room, wretched in every sense, with three or four small furnaces in it, filled with melted glass; primitive bellows being used to raise sufficient heat, with charcoal for fuel. An iron rod thrust into the glowing mass brings out a little of it, which is quickly twisted and bent into a circle, and simply ornamented by the clever use of a long metal blade, like a butcher's knife. Thrust a second time into the furnace, it is then, by means of a second rod, lengthened and finished; the whole time required for the manufacture of a bracelet being only a minute or two. The colours on those seen in Jerusalem and elsewhere are mingled in the furnace, or added by such manipulations as are practised by the glass-blowers of Venice. Among the

other staple industries of Hebron is the manufacture of leather bottles from goats' skins, of earthen pottery, and of light woollen fabrics; while a steady succession of caravans brings to the city, by way of the desert, the produce and manufactures of Egypt. The weavers' quarter is near one of the bazaars, and is very poor, the workshops being only so many halves of cellars, in which the workmen sit on the ground, cross-legged. Nothing could be more primitive than the looms, but the weaving seems no longer to be done by women as it used to be in ancient times,[1] for only men were driving the shuttle, as was the case with the ancient Egyptians.

The houses at Hebron are of stone, many being of two, and some of three, storeys; but owing to the scarcity of wood, each floor is really a set of vaults, with arches meeting overhead from the corner of each room, the domes being hidden, on the upper storey, by a parapet, within which, round the top of the arch, is a flat space, such as Orientals delight in. Built on the slopes of a hill, the houses rise above each other, terrace over terrace, with a fine effect. The great mosque over the cave of Machpelah stands out above all, as the chief building of the town. Drainage, the lighting of the streets, water supply brought to the houses, any system of cleaning the streets, are of course unknown; indeed, there never seem to have been any such Western impertinences in an Eastern town or city, except perhaps in Cæsarea, which Herod drained in the Roman manner. The population was said by the German missionary to be 17,000, of whom 2,000 are Jews, and the rest bigoted Mahommedans, there being only five Christians in the whole city.

A part of Hebron, the western, is still called Eshcolah, from Eshcol, the king in Abraham's day, and a small wady

[1] Prov. xxxi. 13; 2 Kings xxiii. 7. See *ante*, p. 172.

near is called Wady Eshcol.[1] There are two pools, with stairs leading down to the water; they are not often full, but sometimes, after long-continued rains, they overflow. One, some distance down the valley, is called "Othniel's Pool," by a mistake as to the scene of Caleb's gift of the upper and lower springs to his daughter.[2] The sides are cemented, but the water was green, and, as Westerns would think, unfit for use. The other pool, which I passed on entering the town, is "Abraham's Pool." Both are of a good size, the lower one 133 feet square, and about twenty-two feet deep; the other, at the town, eighty-five feet by fifty-five, and nineteen feet deep. Men and women are constantly ascending and descending the steps inside, the former with great black skin bottles on their backs, the women with large water-jars. On the open ground round the other pool naked and half-naked Mahommedan children were wrangling and playing—fierce shoots from a fierce stock. Till within a few years a Christian was certain to be insulted, or even stoned, by them; but latterly they have confined their hostility to the Jews, the sight of a boy of this race being a signal for cursing him and his whole people, from his father backwards. The Orientals are, indeed, mighty in cursing, and always have been. They will curse the fathers and mothers, the grandfather, and all the ancestors of anyone with whom they have a dispute, imprecating all kinds of evils on everyone related to the object of their rage. We can see the same custom in different parts of the Old Testament—for it needed Christ to teach men love. An example is offered in David's curse on Joab for the murder of Abner. "Let the dead man's blood rest on the head of Joab, and on all his father's

[1] This is a corruption of Ain Kashkaleh, north of the town.
[2] Josh. xv. 19; Judg. i. 15.

house, and let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on the sword, or that lacketh bread."[1] So, too, we read that Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, "Thou son of the perverse, rebellious woman,"[2] thus cursing his son's mother —his own wife.

The great Mosque of Abraham, built over the Cave of Machpelah, where the patriarchs are supposed to lie buried, is on the eastern edge of the town, with houses of all sizes close round it on every side, so that you come upon it before you are aware. Except a few royal personages, our Prince of Wales and his sons among them, no one, if not a Mahommedan, has in modern times been allowed to enter it. It is enclosed on three sides by an outer wall of Arab construction. The mosque itself is a quadrangle, of grey stone, 197 feet long by 111 feet broad, and strengthened at intervals by buttresses, the masonry of the walls showing, throughout, a bevel on the four edges of each stone, as in the older masonry of the Haram at Jerusalem. The thickness, apart from the buttresses, is no less than eight and a half feet, which, again, is just the same as that of the Haram walls at Jerusalem. The mosque is built on a hill, so that the paved floor of the inner space between these ancient walls and the modern Saracenic walls enclosing them is about fifteen feet above the street, while the height of the ancient wall, with its simple projecting cornice, is about forty feet; but a modern wall, with battlements, is built on the top of the original one. We were led to the eastern side, which is reached by ascending a filthy lane, and found a door—the only one there is—opening into the court. Through this we were permitted to go and look at the great old wall;

[1] 2 Sam. iii. 29. [2] 1 Sam. xx. 30.

but we could only stand inside the door; to go down to the area, and touch the wall, was not permitted. Even for this privilege, moreover, we had to pay a good "bakshish."

The interior of the mosque, it appears, was used, at least in the time of the Crusades, as a Christian church; a portion at the south end, seventy feet long, being divided into a nave and two aisles, lighted by windows in a clerestory raised from the centre of the roof along its whole length. The roof itself was groined, and nearly flat, with a lead covering outside, and rested within on four great pillars, with capitals set off with thick leaves, in the mediæval style.

The only known entrances to the Cave of Machpelah, which lies underneath the church, are unfortunately covered by the stone floor, and are never opened, to avoid the displacement of the pavement, which would be regarded as a desecration of so sacred a spot. The sheikh of the mosque, however, describes the cave as being double, which agrees with its name Machpelah—"Division in Half"—and also with the uniform tradition which led it, in the Middle Ages, to be spoken of as "the Double Cave."

Of the spots under which the three entrances to this venerable resting-place of the patriarchs are said to be, one is covered with stone slabs, clamped with iron; the second simply with stone flags, forming part of the floor of the church; while the third, close to the west wall of the church, is a shaft, rising slightly above the level of the church-floor, and covered, like a well, with a stone, the hole in which is more than a foot across. A strong light having been let down through it, the door, walls, floor, and sides of the chamber beneath are seen; but this is not, after all, either of the two caves, but a room which is said to lead to the western cavern, with a doorway at the south-east of it, very much like the square doorways

to ancient rock-cut tombs in Palestine. Strange to say, the floor is thickly covered with written prayers to the patriarchs, thrown down by the Mahommedans through the well-like shaft in the church-floor. From these and other details, Captain Conder, after personal examination, thinks that Machpelah "probably resembles many of the rock-cut sepulchres of Palestine, with a square ante-chamber carefully quarried, and two interior sepulchral chambers, to which access has been made, at a later period, through the roofs."[1] There was, no doubt, an entrance, in Abraham's time, from the "field of Mamre, before the cave," but this has long ago been blocked up by buildings.

The space outside the part of the edifice once used as a church, and anciently forming the courtyard, is now filled up with various Arab structures connected with the mosque. The church itself was outside the ancient end wall of the sanctuary, through which there are two openings, to permit passing from the church to the inner space. In the building as a whole there are six monuments, or mock tombs, to the illustrious dead who are assumed to be below, each being supposed to lie immediately under the cenotaph bearing his or her name. Those of Isaac and Rebekah are in the church half, lying in the direction of the nave, so that they are not placed as Mahommedan custom requires, for in that case they would be at right angles with their present position; and it is the same with the cenotaphs in the other half of the mosque. The monuments to Isaac and Rebekah are enclosed in oblong walls with gable roofs, rising about twelve feet above the church-floor, the material being alternate bands of yellowish and reddish limestone, from the neighbouring hills. At the gable ends are

[1] *Pal. Fund Reports*, 1882, p. 200.

brass crescents, and there are windows in the sides and roofs, with heavy iron bars, through which the imitation tombs are visible, a door of wood ornamented with brass-work giving access to each. The tombs themselves are covered with richly-embroidered silk hangings—green for Isaac, crimson for Rebekah—and have cloths hung as canopies over them, while manuscript copies of the Koran lie open around on low wooden rests. The same colours mark the two sexes in the coverings over the other cenotaphs, which are more or less like these. All claim, as I have said, to be spread over the spots where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with their wives, Sarah, Rebekah, and Leah, rest. The walls of the church are veneered with marble to the height of six feet, and have a band of Arabic writing running along above, the rest of the wall being whitewashed, as are the great pillars, and the piers corresponding to them in the end walls. The floor is covered with carpets throughout.

The cenotaph of Abraham, in the mosque half of the building, is about eight feet long, eight feet high, and four feet broad, and is covered with green and white silk, embroidered with Arabic texts in gold thread. Two green banners with gold lettering lean against the tomb, the shrine and walls round which are pierced with open-barred gates, said to be of iron plated with silver; an inscription on one bearing the date of A.D. 1259, and containing an invocation to Abraham. Silver lamps and ostrich egg-shells hang before the cenotaph, and copies of the Koran, on low rests, surround it. The walls of the shrine in which it stands are cased with marble. The shrine of Sarah is much the same, with open-barred gates and a domed roof. Besides the cenotaphs to Jacob and Leah, there is one, outside the inner wall, to Joseph, with a passage from it to a lower one to the same patriarch.

The fullest account of Machpelah as it was in past ages is that of Benjamin of Tudela, by whom it was visited in or about the year 1163, when it was held by the Christians. He speaks of it as "a large place of worship, called St. Abraham," and adds that "the Gentiles or Christians have erected six sepulchres in this place, which they pretend to be those of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah. The pilgrims are told that they are the sepulchres of the fathers, and money is extorted from them. But if any Jew comes, who gives an additional fee to the keeper of the cave, an iron door is opened which dates from the times of their forefathers, who rest in peace, and, with a burning candle in his hands, the visitor descends into a first cave, which is empty, traverses a second which is in the same state, and at last reaches a third, which contains six sepulchres—those of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of Sarah, Rebekah, and Leah—one opposite the other."

"All these sepulchres," the writer proceeds, "bear inscriptions, the letters being engraved. Thus, upon that of our father Abraham, we read (in Hebrew), 'This is the tomb of Abraham our father: upon him be peace.' A lamp burns in the cave and upon the sepulchres continually, both night and day, and you there see tubs, filled with the bones of Israelites; for to this day it is a custom of the House of Israel to bring thither the bones of their forefathers, and to leave them there." Such tubs, or arks, of bones, bearing rude Hebrew inscriptions, have repeatedly been found in tombs near Jerusalem.

The stones of the ancient wall of the mosque are marvellously finished and fitted to their places, which was no slight task, since one of them is thirty-eight feet long and three and a half feet high. Everywhere the chisel-

ling is very fine, and all, as I have said, have the old Jewish bevel at the edges, broad, shallow, and beautifully cut. Of the age of this noble piece of architecture, various opinions have been formed, many thinking that it dates from before the Captivity, others that it was built by Herod the Great. It certainly existed in the days of Josephus, for he speaks of its being "of beautiful marble and admirably worked," and it has been forcibly said that if it had been one of the creations of Herod, whose magnificence the historian so delighted to extol, it would have been mentioned as one of his works. Tradition assigns it to King Solomon, and it may be as old as the Jewish monarchy.

The entrance to the mosque is by a flight of broad steps, which, in my innocence, I approached, without thinking of the fact that Christians are not allowed to enter the sacred building. I had only got up two or three steps, however, when my ambitious career was brought to a stop, and I had to content myself with looking at a hole in the wall through which the poor Jews are permitted to thrust pieces of paper on which their names are written, in the hope that Abraham may see them and intercede in their behalf. What a strange thing is human faith!

But are the bodies of the patriarchs really at Hebron? St. Stephen, in his defence, tells us that "Jacob went down into Egypt, and he died, himself, and our fathers; and they were carried over into Shechem, and laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a price, in silver, of the sons of Hamor in Shechem."[1] But as Genesis tells us expressly that the burial-place bought by Abraham was in Hebron, not at Shechem, and also that Joseph and his brethren buried Jacob at Hebron, in the "cave of the field

[1] Acts vii. 15, 16 (R.V.).

of Machpelah," it is clear that, in the excitement of his position before his judges, Stephen had confused the buying of a sepulchre at Shechem by Joseph, and the burial in it of Joseph and possibly his brethren, with the provision of a cave-tomb at Hebron, in which Joseph afterwards laid his father.[1]

It is striking to find how exactly the narrative of Abraham's purchase of the grave and his sorrow at Sarah's death,[2] is in keeping with what would even now follow two such incidents in ordinary life. The patriarch, we are told, "came to mourn" for his dead wife—that is, to hold a public mourning—which, in the case of "the princess" of such a powerful emir as her husband, would even now be a great event. He, himself, would sit for a time in his tent beside the corpse; but the climate made speedy burial necessary, so that he would very soon have to "stand up from before his dead." The mourning women, the dirge music, and the lamentations general in the demonstrative East, must have engrossed all Hebron for the time. Even for one in a much humbler position the loud weeping, the beating of the breast, the cries, and wailing music are well-nigh overpowering; for one so distinguished as Sarah, they must have been irresistibly affecting.

The story of the purchase of the tomb is intensely Oriental. It was of the utmost moment to Abraham that no dispute should, at any time, arise as to the right of property in the tomb where his wife was to be laid, and where he, himself, in due time was to rest by her side. He comes before the sons of Heth, therefore, at the gate of the town,[3] and tells them that he is, as they know, only a stranger and a sojourner with them, and therefore owns

[1] Gen. l. 13; Josh. xxiv. 32; Gen. xxxiii. 19. [2] Gen. xxiii.
[3] Gen. xxiii. 10.

no ground in Hebron: will any of them sell him a piece suitable for the grave of his dead wife, and others of his family afterwards?—for it was usual with such a man to have a hereditary burial-place.[1] A number of the townsmen were, as usual, in the open space at the gate—the great gossiping haunt of Eastern buyers to-day; and the crowd which the patriarch gathered round were ready to entertain his proposal, though, with true Oriental dexterity, prompt to veil their keenness to sell under an air of courteous liberality. "He was 'a chief of God' among them; the choice of their sepulchres was at his disposal: none of them would withhold his sepulchre from him." But he knew too well what all this meant. He was aware that it was only a flourish preliminary to a keen bargain. He had already fixed his heart on the Cave of Machpelah, and so, after bowing grateful acknowledgments of their politeness, he begged that if they would, indeed, be so good as to help him, they might mediate between him and Ephron, the son of Zohar, for the purchase of Machpelah, which lay in the end of Ephron's field. Mediators are always employed in such transactions, even at the present day; indeed, no bargain can be made without all the crowd around having something to say to it. Abraham would pay full value for the property; let them intercede for him—that was all he would ask.

Ephron, who all this time was among[2] the good folks gathered to this colloquy, and who were seated, like himself, cross-legged on the ground, instantly responded, just as a Hebron man in a similar case would to-day. Sell it!—that be far from him! He would give it to the great stranger—yes, he would give it! In the same way the Arab at Gaza, as I have already said, gave me his spear;[3] and so Orientals, generally, upon meeting you,

[1] Winer, i. 444. [2] Hebrew. [3] See *ante*, p. 250.

might profess to give you their house and all that was in it; the words meaning nothing beyond a recognised form of politeness. Ephron had three times in a breath vowed that he would *give* Abraham the field, calling the "sons of his people" to witness his doing so; but the patriarch knew what the gift was worth, and, gravely bowing his thanks, went on with his proposals to buy it. "If thou wilt indeed show kindness to thy servant, I will give thee money for the field, and I will bury my dead there." This brought Ephron to the point, and forced him to name his terms. "The land is worth four hundred shekels of silver, but what is *that* betwixt me and thee?" Anyone who wishes to buy a piece of land, or anything else, in Palestine to-day, will hear the very same words. But Abraham was a shrewd man of business; he knew what all these generous professions meant, and forthwith closed the bargain by weighing out the silver to Ephron, there being no coins as yet, although there were traders as keen as their descendants of the nineteenth century. Indeed, Abraham would have needed, even in our time, to weigh the money, for every "merchant" carries scales with him to guard against light weight, coins sometimes being "sweated" or clipped by Jews.

The mere payment of the money was not, however, enough. Then, as now, a formal act was requisite, by which all the details of the purchase—"the field, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, and that were in all the borders round about"—were recited and duly acknowledged by Ephron. In Abraham's time this legal completion of the sale apparently consisted in a recapitulation of every item before the assembled burghers at the city gate; no document being drawn up. But in our day every particular must be duly stated in a written deed, as prolix and minute as

a conveyance by a Western lawyer, so that no possible loophole be left for a future evasion of the bargain.

The hills round Hebron, one of the few towns in Palestine that lie in a hollow, look utterly barren, except the one to the south, which appears covered with olives as one looks up from below. But when you climb to the top of the hills behind the city, on the north-east, the whole valley lies at your feet, with the hills on all sides, and you then receive a very different impression. Behind the town the slopes are, indeed, barren; but towards the south they stretch away in soft outlines, covered with olives, till they fade into a blue mist towards the wilderness of Edom. A small but well-cultivated valley lies behind, on the east, dotted thickly with olives. The hills on which I stood were bare for the most part, but there was a pretence of pasture on some portions. To the west lay the long valley of Hebron and the slopes on its further side, covered with glorious olive-woods and vineyards, and rich olive-grounds and gardens reached away to the south also. On the north, hills rose beyond hills, covered with vineyard above vineyard, on countless terraces, the loose stones carefully built into walls, step above step, to catch all the soil brought down by the winter storms; so that slopes which without this provision would have been bare sheets of rock, were transformed by it into rich fertility.

The famous valley in which the patriarchs fed their flocks in ages long gone by, and in which they now rest in their deep sleep, was all before me.[1] The city at my feet had been a busy hive of men during a period dating back seven years before Zoan-Tanis, the old capital of the Delta, was founded in Egypt, in the grey morning of the world. For seven years and a half David, the Shepherd King and the Psalmist of Israel, had held his rude court

[1] Gen. xiii. 18; xxiii. 2; xxxvii. 14.

before the very gate under my eyes.[1] The pool over which the hands and feet of the murderers of Ishbosheth had been nailed up lay in the afternoon sun. It seemed as if one could see Joab once more stalking through the narrow streets; as if one could hear the wail over the chieftain Abner, foully murdered by him, perhaps in that very gateway.[2] In the country around David had for years led an unsettled life, at the head of a band of men made up of all who were "in distress, or debt, or who were discontented"[3]—a wandering Arab, in fact, living by requisitions on the wealthy, in return for protecting their property from others like himself, and for not taking what he wanted by violence.[4] An outlaw, he had lived as best he could, with his rough followers, in the woods and caves a few miles off.[5] The hills around Hebron are still covered, often for miles together, with scrub of all kinds, and are therefore much frequented by charcoal-burners, who export from this region most of the charcoal used in Jerusalem. The defeat of Saul at Gilboa was the beginning of David's rise. Recognised as king by the elders of Hebron, after he had propitiated them by gifts, the son of Jesse came hither with his braves and was accepted by Judah as ruler.[6] We are apt to forget his long residence at Hebron, on account of the splendour of his subsequent reign in Jerusalem; but his contemporaries regarded the town with the greatest reverence as the home of Abraham, and the cradle of David's empire.

Many years after the latter had been joyfully greeted in it as king, the streets rang with rejoicing over the

[1] 2 Sam. v. 5. [2] 2 Sam. iii. 27. [3] 1 Sam. xxii. 2.
[4] See his demand from Nabal of Carmel (1 Sam. xxv. 5).
[5] 1 Sam. xxii. 1—5; xxiii. 15.
[6] 1 Sam. xxx. 26, 31; 2 Sam. ii. 1—4.

accession of Absalom, his treacherous son, who here raised the banner of revolt. Idumæans, Greeks, Romans, Saracens, Crusaders, and Turks had since then ruled the destinies of Hebron, in long succession, but the changeless features of the landscape, of the climate, and even of the human life around me, veiled the immense gulf between long-vanished ages and the present, and seemed to bring up again before my eyes the moving life of the distant past.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE COUNTRY SOUTH OF HEBRON.

The south of Palestine, from the region of Hebron, sinks in a series of gigantic steps to the wilderness of Et Tih, south of Beersheba. In the neighbourhood of Juttah, the traditional birth-place of St. John the Baptist, the landscape falls abruptly to a broad plateau, divided into two by the great wady which runs from the north of Hebron to Beersheba, and thence, in a north-west curve, to Gerar and the sea, just below Gaza, after a total course of about sixty-five English miles, in which it descends more than 3,000 feet. The plateau is about 2,600 feet above the sea-level, but it is 900 feet lower than the hills immediately north of Hebron, which are 3,500 feet above the Mediterranean. Juttah itself, on the edge of the plateau, is about 2,800 feet above the sea, so that in five or six miles the country descends 700 feet, and presently sinks, suddenly, 200 feet more. The table-land consists of open downs and arable soil, of soft white chalk, formed since the hard limestone of the Judæan hills. All the rain that falls on this district forthwith filters through the surface deposit—a feature which causes an entire absence of springs; and hence the inhabitants, once numerous, but now very few, have always depended on cemented wells and tanks. The water, however, need not be lost, if there were but skill enough to reach it, for it is soon stopped in its filtration downwards by the dense

limestone, and flows over it as a subterranean river towards the sea. A second great land-step, farther south, brings the level at Beersheba to a little under 800 feet above the sea; so that in the twenty miles from Hebron to Beersheba, in a straight line, the descent is nearly 2,700 feet.

There are only two inhabited villages on the Juttah table-land; but ruins on all sides show that it was once thickly peopled, as, indeed, is seen from the same evidence a great part of the way to Beersheba. There are no trees, and in summer the surface is dry and sunburnt; but in spring the rains make it a field of verdure and flowers, and there is always pasture, in one part or another, for great numbers of flocks and herds. Caves, such as are still inhabited in some parts, abound in the countless hills; so that this would seem to have been part of the country once inhabited by the Horites, or "Cave-men." Indeed, their name clings to the locality in the designations of two ruined towns. This is the region known in the Bible as the Negeb, which unfortunately is always translated "the south," though the Revised Version admits the compromise of a capital letter. It comes from a root meaning "to be dry" or "dried up," which accurately describes its appearance. It was in this district that Caleb gave his daughter, with her dowry, to the valiant Othniel;[1] and it has an abiding charm as the scene of David's wanderings.

Juttah, an ancient priestly town, is held by the Greek Church to be the birth-place of St. John the Baptist, as has been said, and as such it is the goal of pilgrimage to thousands of Greek Christians each year. Support to this view is believed to be found in the words of St. Luke, which, in our version, speak of the Virgin Mary as journeying

[1] Josh. xv. 16—19.

"into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah."[1] This, it is held, should be "to the town Judah," or Juttah, since it would be vague in the extreme to speak merely of "a city of Judah." On this ground, so great authorities as Reland, Robinson, and Riehm[2] think this place was actually the residence of Zacharias and Elizabeth, and the birth-place of the Baptist. It is a large stone village, standing high on a ridge; but some of the population live in tents. Underground cisterns supply water, and on the south there are a few olive-trees, but the hill and its neighbourhood are very stony, though the vine must in ancient times have been extensively cultivated, since rock-cut wine-presses are found all round the village. There are, besides, some rock-cut tombs, which also date from antiquity. But, poor though the country looks and is, the population are very rich in flocks, the village owning, it is said, no fewer than 7,000 sheep, besides goats, cows, camels, horses, and donkeys. Its sheikh, indeed, owned a flock of 250 sheep. The hills everywhere are very rugged and stony, consisting of hard crystalline limestone; but the valleys, which are numerous, have good soil in them, some of them being especially fertile. The vineyards and olive plantations on the west, north, and south of Hebron—for the east side of the town has none—appeared like a great oasis in a desert, though the Negeb is very far from being a desert as things are judged in such a land as Palestine. A low scrub covered the rising ground and rounded hill-tops, except on the eastern slopes, which, being quite cut off from the night mists from the west, are bare of vegetation, except after the spring rains. The valleys, in spite of their fertility, are narrow and more or less stony, with

[1] Luke i. 39.

[2] Reland, *Palestine*, p. 870; Robinson, ii. 628; Riehm, *Juttah*.

steep slopes and occasional cliffs, some of them breaking down very suddenly from the watershed to a depth, in a few cases, of over 500 feet.

From Juttah it is a very short distance south-east—about three miles—to Carmel, now known as Kurmul, famous for the episode in David's history of his dispute with the rough and niggardly Nabal, and his obtaining Abigail, the poor creature's widow, as wife. A great basin between the hills stretches from the north of Juttah to Carmel, rich with fine fields of wheat over its undulating surface, and almost free from rocks, even the loose stones being less abundant than usual. The land belongs to Government, and is rented by men of Hebron.

When Dr. Robinson passed over it the grain was ripening for the sickle, and watchmen were posted at intervals to protect it from cattle and flocks. His Arabs, he tells us, "were an hungred," and freely "plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands,"[1] no one thinking it wrong, but an ancient custom, which even the owners of the fields would recognise. The Jews who challenged the disciples could hardly have done so simply because the corn had been plucked, even though it was the Sabbath. The trouble was that the offenders had rubbed the ears in their hands, which, as a kind of threshing, was doing work on the holy day, and thus a violation of law which these bitter Sabbatarians could not pass by. It is possible, however, that they also reckoned the plucking of the ears as a kind of reaping.

The terror of tent Arabs is so universal among the peasantry of the Holy Land, that a band of countrymen who passed by thought it unsafe, for fear of these plunderers, that we should spend the night at a place so lonely as Carmel, advising us to go on to Maon, where there are

[1] Matt. xii. 1; Mark ii. 23; Luke vi. 1.

sheepfolds among the ruins of that old city, and consequently shepherds, whose presence would secure safety. The land round Carmel was, in David's time, partly the property of Nabal; but there was even then a village of the name, as, indeed, there had been in the days of Joshua.[1] At present the ruins are those of an important town, including remains of a castle and two churches; and there is, besides, a fine reservoir, well built, lying below the ancient site, and measuring no less than 117 feet in length by seventy-four feet in width; a spring, which runs from a cave in an underground rock-cut channel, still serving to fill it. The ruins mark the splendour of the short-lived Christian kingdom in Palestine, for they are all examples of the magnificent architecture of the Crusaders. How old the reservoir may be is unknown, but it was already in existence more than 700 years ago. The walls of the old Crusading fortress, seven feet thick, are still, in parts, twenty-four feet high, but they have to a large extent been carried off for building material. Mailed warriors once clambered the ruined stair still seen in the thickness of the north wall, and watched the Saracen from the flat roof, or sped arrows at his horsemen through the loopholes. Courts, towers, revetments, outside walls, ditches, and much else, were once the busy care of a strong Christian garrison, but for centuries have lain in ruins. Of the two churches, the one is about eighty feet long and forty broad, with carved pillars and sculptured medallions still to be seen. The other is not quite so long, but as broad.

As late as 300 years after Christ, a Roman garrison kept watch and ward in Carmel against the Arabs from the south and east; but the city doubtless fell into decay long before the arrival of the Crusaders, of whom King

[1] Josh. xv. 55.

Amalrich had here his head-quarters. The ruins of the town lie round the top and along the two sides of a pleasant and rather deep valley, the head of which is shut in by a half-circle of bare rocky hills. Foundations and broken walls of dwellings lie scattered in dreary confusion and desolation, for, as I have often said, under the Turk the country has become almost depopulated.

It was here that Saul set up the trophy of his victory over the Amalekites, and that the sheep-shearing feast of Nabal was held which led the poor churlish man to so disastrous an end.[1] David and his men, like many tribes of tent Arabs now, depended largely for their support, as we have seen, on contributions from the population in their neighbourhood; and having associated in the wilderness pastures with the herdsmen and shepherds of Nabal, protecting them from the plunderers around and doing other good offices for them, they naturally expected, according to Arab usage, a liberal recognition of their services. Nabal, however, had a small soul. To pay black-mail either for volunteered protection of his flocks, or as a reward for the defenders having abstained from helping themselves at his expense, was a sore trouble to him, though he had 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats. But it was a rough state of things that allowed David, in revenge for such meanness, to order his 400 men to gird on their swords and kill, without mercy, by a sudden night attack, every creature that "pertained to Nabal."[2] Sheep-shearing is always marked by a rude feast to the shearers; and Nabal himself held a banquet like that of a king,[3] so that he might well have been more generous. But David's threatened revenge is that of a wild sheikh of the desert, and shows that the Hebrews must in some respects have

[1] 1 Sam. xv. 12; xxv. 2. [2] 1 Sam. xxv. 2—38.
[3] 1 Sam. xxv. 36.

been little better than Bedouins, in those ages. It was well that Abigail, a lady of this very place, Carmel, had ready wit and gracious softness, else David would have committed a terrible crime. Maon, where Nabal's house stood, is a conical hill, about a mile south of Carmel, which lies lower, though still 2,700 feet above the sea. From the hill-top you look down towards the Dead Sea, on the north; Hebron is seen in its valley, and, on the west, the ancient Debir, the city of Caleb. Nine places still bearing their ancient names are in sight—Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Juttah, Jattir, Socoh, Anab, Eshtemoa, and Hebron—so close together lie the localities mentioned in Bible history. Only some small foundations of hewn stone, a square enclosure, and several cisterns are now to be seen at Maon: are they the remains of Nabal's great establishment?

Less than three miles west lies Eshtemoa, now called Semua, one of the hill-towns of Judah, allotted, with the land round it, to the priests,[1] and frequented by David in the dark years of his fugitive wilderness life, during which it was so friendly to him that he sent gifts to its elders after his victory over the Amalekites.[2] It is seven miles from Hebron, and is a considerable village, built on a low hill, among broad stony valleys almost unfit for tillage, but yielding tufts of grass and plants, on which sheep and goats thrive in Palestine. Some olive-trees are growing south of the village, and old stones, very large, and bevelled at the edges, in the old Jewish style, some of them ten feet long, occur as the remains of ancient walls. There are also some ruins of a mediæval castle, but it has lain for centuries a ruin amidst ruins. Seven miles straight south, and we are at the limit of Palestine, the hills forming the boundary trending northwards, after passing

[1] Josh. xxi. 14; 1 Chron. vi. 57. [2] 1 Sam. xxx. 28.

Beersheba, and thus leaving so much less distance between Hebron and the border. It may here be pointed out how small a country Palestine is, for it is only about thirty-three miles in a straight line from Jerusalem to Tell Arad, a solitary hill facing the desert; the seat in Joshua's time of a petty Canaanite chief.[1] From Hebron, it is less than seventeen English miles off, and yet David never seems to have wandered so far south, for Ziklag, which was given to him by the Philistine king, Achish, lies on a line further north, on the upper side of the Wady es Sheria, eleven English miles east-south-east from Gaza, and nineteen south-west from Beit Jibrin. The name Zuheilîka, recovered there by Conder and Kitchener in 1875, fixes the site of Ziklag on one of three low hills from which David was to keep watch for his Philistine patron against the Bedouin hordes of the desert.[2] Beersheba lay fifteen miles to the south-east, and yet from it to Dan, the northern boundary of Palestine, is only 139 miles; and the paltry breadth of twenty miles, from the coast to the Jordan on the north, increases slowly to only forty between the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea at Gaza on the south. Palestine, in fact, is only about the size of Wales.

So small is the country which was honoured by God to be the scene of Divine Revelation. But it has special characteristics, which eminently fitted it for such a dignity. Apart from the religious peculiarities of the Shemitic race —their love of simple, untroubled faith, as opposed to the restless speculation of the Aryan races—the position of the Holy Land, in the centre of the ancient world, was exactly suited to the dissemination of the great doctrines of the true faith among mankind. Its isolation from heathen countries was, however, not less marked, for the sea bounded it on the one side, and the desert on the south

[1] Josh. xii. 14. [2] Riehm, 1837.

and east, while on the north access to it could only be had through the long valley of Lebanon. No land, therefore, could have been better fitted to protect Revelation from the contamination of other creeds, or from the influence of foreign manners—then, of course, idolatrous. Yet the physical configuration of the country was such as to save its people from the narrow experience of dwellers in a land where there is less variety of landscape. On the north, the snows of Lebanon presented the scenery of regions where winter triumphs, and brought before the Hebrews the plants, the trees, the animals, and the other natural phenomena familiar to cold climates. In the Jordan valley, on the other hand, though still within sight of snowy peaks, they had around them the plants, the birds, the animals, the scenery, and the distinctive features of an Indian province; while in the central hill-country they had every gradation between these great extremes. Hence the Bible, written in a country presenting within its narrow limits the main features of lands widely separated, is a book of the world, notwithstanding its Oriental colour. Its imagery and its wealth of spiritual experience adapt it to every region of the earth, and secure it a welcome wherever man is found, making it not only intelligible, but rich in a varied interest.

The "south country," or Negeb, of which Eshtemoa may be regarded as the centre, was the favourite pasture-land of the patriarchs. Over these stony hills the flocks of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob must often have wandered, for they had to go far afield at times, when the drought withered the herbage of the early months. Indeed, we find the sheep and goats of Jacob as far north as Dothan, close to the plain of Esdraelon, about ninety miles in a straight line from Beersheba, where his tents were pitched; and of course the journey, in such a tangle of

hills, must have been far longer by the winding routes. Abraham seems to have lived by turns at Beersheba and Hebron; Isaac at Gerar, Lahai-roi, and Beersheba;[1] Jacob mainly at Beersheba, though his early and later life were both spent in foreign countries. Lahai-roi seems, however, if the proposed identification be correct, to have been a wonderful distance for so sedentary a man as Isaac to travel. It appears to have lain on the caravan-road from Beersheba to Egypt, ten hours south of Ruheibeh, the ancient Rehoboth—"the Open Place"—a spring about twenty miles south-west of Beersheba, mentioned by Moses, and recorded in the Nineveh inscriptions as the frontier town of the Assyrian Empire towards Egypt[2]—a very striking "undesigned coincidence," indeed, between Scripture and the tablets of Nineveh! There are, even now, wells at Lahai-roi known as Hagar's Springs, and the wady in which they occur is famous for its abundance of water wherever wells have been sunk for it. The supply over all this region, and, indeed, in the hilly Negeb also, has always to be obtained by tapping the subterranean river of which I have so often spoken as extending under a great breadth of country. Isaac was famous in this way, and perhaps some of the wells still used were originally dug and cased with masonry by his slaves. Nor will anyone who looks at those still found in these districts think lightly of the labour involved in constructing them, or wonder that even so great a man as Uzziah was remembered for the number he dug.[3] I have often asked myself whether some of those filled up at Gerar might have been among the number stopped by the Philistine herdsmen after Abraham and Isaac, with great toil, had

[1] Gen. xiii. 18; xxi. 33; xxiv. 62; xxv. 11; xxvi. 1, 33.
[2] Muhlau and Volck, p. 783.
[3] 2 Chron. xxvi. 10.

opened them.[1] It is quite possible, for the destruction of wells has in all ages been a barbarous custom in Eastern quarrels, though it, in effect, reduces a fertile district to a wilderness.

The thirsty Negeb, and still more the sandy region south and east of Palestine, are often mocked by that strange phenomenon of hot and desert regions, the mirage. We meet it also on the coast-plains, and in the Haurân, and always with the same curious imitation of natural objects, and the same illusory appearance of water, though the whole is only the reflection of rays of light on particles of floating vapour. Every tuft is exaggerated into a tree, and the blades of grass, shooting up here and there, become a jungle. You even see them reversed, in what seems a wide lake, along whose shores they rise. The best description of the mirage that I know is that by Major Skinner, in his "Journey Overland to India." He was travelling across the desert between Palestine and the Euphrates, and tells us that—"About noon the most perfect deception that can be conceived exhilarated our spirits, and promised an early resting-place. We had observed a slight mirage two or three times before, but this day it surpassed all I had even fancied. Although aware that these appearances have often led people astray, I could not bring myself to believe that this was unreal. The Arabs were doubtful, and said that as we had found water yesterday, it was not improbable we should find some to-day. The seeming lake was broken in several parts by little islands of sand, which gave strength to the delusion. The dromedaries of the sheikhs at length reached its borders, and appeared to us to have commenced to ford, as they advanced and became more surrounded by the vapour. I thought they had got into deep water, and

[1] Gen. xxvi. 17 ff.

moved with greater caution. In passing over the sand-banks their figures were reflected in the water. So convinced was Mr. Calmun of its reality, that he dismounted and walked towards the deepest part of it, which was on the right hand. He followed the deceitful lake for a long time, and to our sight was strolling on its bank, his shadow stretching to a great length beyond. There was not a breath of wind; it was a sultry day, and such an one as would have added dreadfully to the disappointment if we had been at any time without water." The Arab word for the mirage is *sĕrab*, and this we find once in the Bible in the Hebrew form, *sarab*. It is used by Isaiah when he says that "the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water,"[1] before the Tribes ransomed from Babylon, and returning across the desert to Palestine. The correct rendering, however, is, "the *mirage* shall become a pool"—the mock lake in the burning waste, so often the despair of the wanderer, shall become a real lake, the pledge of refreshment and joy.[2]

The story of David's wanderings presents itself with wonderful vividness as we journey from point to point over the great upland plateau of the Negeb. We have seen him in the caves, high up the low slope of the brown rounded Hill of Adullam, at the head of the broad flat corn-valley of Elah, and have followed him to Keilah on its steep hill, a few miles to the south, but still looking down into the same wide glen. "The Forest of Hareth," as we have noticed, was near at hand, supplying, in its dense "yaar" of scrubby contorted trees, a secure hiding-place for the time, on the edge of the heights overlooking the Shephelah. But at last he had to flee from each of these retreats and betake himself still further south, to the country round Ziph, a small town lying on a hill

[1] Isa. xxxv. 7. [2] Geikie, *Hours with the Bible*, v. 47.

which rises about a hundred feet above the others that surround it. It is only about five miles, almost due south from Hebron, but in such a tangle of hills and glens that even so short a distance would have secured effective concealment had the people been loyal. David must often have looked out from the top of the hill, which offers a clear survey of the wide plains running out from below the town—then very fruitful, but now lying waste, with no man to till them, for Ziph is an uninhabited heap. To the east he must many times have looked over Jeshimon—"the Wilderness"—as the bare hills which stretch away in hideous nakedness, sinking in huge sun-smitten steps towards the Dead Sea, were then called—a region of wild, irreclaimable desolation, seamed with countless ravines, frequently so narrow and precipitous that the sun shines into them only for a very short time in the longest and brightest day—profound clefts, so dark that the Hebrews spoke of one and another as "the Valley of the Shadow of Death" —that is, dark as the subterranean regions of the dead —David himself using their dispiriting and terrifying gloom as an image of the direst affliction.[1] Ziph must have been at one time a considerable town, judging from the ruins that now lie on a low ridge to the east of the Tell; but David would find himself safer on the hills around, which are even now covered with stunted growth of all kinds, and were then, apparently, still better veiled by underwood, though no trees, in our sense, could ever have flourished in this sun-scorched and waterless region. Here the famous meeting betwixt the shepherd-hero and Jonathan took place,[2] when the two made a covenant of friendship, faithfully kept before Jehovah; Jonathan strengthening his friend's "hand in God."

In our English Bible we are told that David "abode

[1] Ps. xxiii. 4. [2] 1 Sam. xxiii. 16.

in the wood," using its "strongholds" as hiding-places;[1] and no doubt he did so for a time; but the discovery by Captain Conder of a site known, even now, as Khoreisa, little more than a mile to the south of Ziph, makes it probable that we should understand Khoresh, the word translated "wood," rather as the name of a village among the brush-covered hills, than as meaning the "yaar" round Ziph. The treachery of the Ziphites drove the fugitive ere long from their neighbourhood, to seek refuge in the lonely and forbidding solitudes of the Jeshimon, to the east of their town. Every part of this appalling wilderness would be familiar to the shepherd of Bethlehem, whose flocks must have strayed from time to time down many of its ravines, when the spring rains had brightened them for a few weeks with passing flowers and thinly-sprinkled herbs and grass. Every cave in it would be known to him, for he must often have used them as a fold for his sheep or goats when belated in these wilds, so dangerous from wild beasts and still wilder men. From Khoresh, or Ziph, he doubtless often looked down the rough sea of white peaks and cones, seamed with countless torrent-beds, and worn into deep caverns by the rains of a thousand centuries; and his eye must have frequently rested on the high pointed cliff of Ziz, over Engedi, "the Fountain of the Kid," where precipices 2,000 feet high overhang the Dead Sea, which was about fifteen miles from where he then stood, though in the clear air of Palestine appearing to be much nearer. If forced to do so, he could find a hiding-place in some cave on the steep face of these great crags, among the wild goats, which alone seemed fit for such places. The blue waters of "the Sea" gleamed as if at his feet as he looked down Jeshimon, and beyond it the yellow-pink hills of Moab,

[1] 1 Sam. xxiii. 16, 18, 19.

torn into deep furrows by the winter torrents, would seem, with their level tops, like a friendly table-land, to which he might make his escape, if even the towering rock-wall of Engedi could not protect him.

First, however, he fled to a solitary hill close at hand, Hachilah, apparently one of the peaks of the ridge El-Kolah, about six miles east of Ziph. But he was still pursued, like the partridge which the fowler chases, from spot to spot, over these hills. On the north side of Kolah—not very different in sound from "Ha-kilah"—is a cave, known still as that of "the Dreamers," perhaps the very scene of David's venture into the camp of Saul, when he took away the king's spear, stuck upright in the ground at his head while he slept, as that of the Arab sheikh is now, and the cruse of water which stood at its side, as also is still the Arab custom.[1] Even here, however, the hated one was not safe. A hiding-place farther within the wilderness was needed. This time his refuge was in a ridge known as Hammahlekoth,[2] perhaps the same as that now known as Malaky, which forms the precipitous edge of a wady running east and west about a mile south of Kolah.[3] All Jeshimon is more or less cleft with deep perpendicular chasms, only a few yards across, but often a hundred feet deep, making a circuit of miles necessary to pass from the one side to the other. There is, apparently, however, no other spot in what the Bible calls the wilderness of Maon—the wilderness near that place—except Malaky, where such opposing cliffs occur; and that there were such precipices at Hammahlekoth is shown by the use of the Hebrew word *Selah* in speaking of it. It may well be, therefore, that this was the scene of the memorable interview between Saul and David, when the two stood on "the top of the mountain, afar off, a great

[1] 1 Sam. xxvi. 12. [2] 1 Sam. xxiii. 28. [3] *Tent Work in Palestine.*

space being between them,"[1] that is, the yawning chasm which Saul could not have crossed to get at his enemy, had he wished. Or it may be the scene of David's escape when the Philistine invasion saved him for the time, and when "Saul went on this side of the mountain," cleft in two, as it was, by the impassable gulf, "and David and his men on that side of the mountain."[2]

Not far from Hebron stood, in ancient days, the town Debir, which has been identified, by some, with the village of Dhaheriyeh, by others with El-Dilbeh—the former about twelve miles, the latter a little over four miles, south-west of Hebron.[3] The ancient Debir was first conquered by Joshua, but having passed again from the hands of Israel, was retaken by Othniel, a young hero fighting under Caleb, who, as we have seen,[4] gave him his daughter Achsah in marriage, as the reward of his valour.[5] The young bride's cleverness in obtaining from her father, for dowry, a valley in which there were springs, known as the Upper and Lower, is delightfully told in Judges. As she was being brought home, she urged her husband to ask her father for a field; but it appears as if he lacked the courage to do so, or perhaps his bride seemed dowry enough in herself. She, however, was not to be balked of a good beginning in married life. Caleb could afford her a handsome gift, and she would have it. Besides, did not so fine a fellow as Othniel deserve it? So, as the cavalcade rode slowly on to Othniel's home, Achsah dropped behind till she was alongside her father, then, alighting suddenly from her ass—for like everyone, even now, in Palestine, she had an ass for her steed—and laying hold

[1] 1 Sam. xxvi. 13 (R.V.).
[2] 1 Sam. xxiii. 26 (R.V.).
[3] First, Knobel, Conder; second, Van der Velde.
[4] See *ante*, p. 346.
[5] Josh. x. 38; xi. 21; xii. 13; xv. 15; Judg. i. 11.

of the grey veteran with soft embrace, and winning looks, she conquered him on the spot. "What wilt thou?" was all he could stammer out. "What do I wish?" said she; "why, father, thou hast given me for dowry a dry, burnt-up tract of ground: pray give me also a piece with springs of water, for what is land without flowing springs in a country like this?" What could he do on the wedding-day? "Well, Achsah, thou shalt have 'the upper springs and the nether springs:'" a great gift, with the promise of which she went back quickly enough to tell her husband her good fortune. A secluded valley, exactly suiting this incident, is found at El-Dilbeh. Even at the end of October, after the fierce summer heats, Captain Conder found here a considerable brook running down the middle of the glen, and branching off through small gardens for four or five miles. Such a supply of water is a phenomenon in Palestine; but it is still more extraordinary in the Negeb, where no other springs are found. There are, in all, fourteen springs, in three groups, at El-Dilbeh, both upper and lower—higher up the valley and lower down—which bubble forth all the year round, affording water enough, if there were energy to utilise it, to turn the whole valley into a paradise.[1]

Debir must have had a strange history, for its earlier name had been Kiriath Sepher, or "Book-town," a seat of old Canaanite culture, where scribes diligently recorded and preserved what seemed in their eyes worthy of note. Who can tell how far back this carries the art of writing? But, indeed, among the Accadians on the Euphrates, it had flourished, as the inscriptions in the British Museum prove, for an unknown succession of centuries before Abraham left that region! There was also another name to this strange old town, Kiriath Sanna—"the Town of

[1] *Pal. Reports*, 1874, p. 55.

Learning"—where the priests of the primæval world gathered their students, and taught them the wisdom of the day.

At Dhaheriyeh, one of the claimants for the honour of representing Debir, there is a wine-press of unusual size—nearly eighteen feet long, and over fifteen feet broad—which helps us to understand how Gideon could "thresh wheat by the wine-press, to save it from the Midianites."[1] Cut out, as it was, in the living rock, and of great size, he could store his grain in it unobserved by those at a distance, which would not have been possible if the "floor" had, as usual, been in the open field, or on the top of a hill. Dhaheriyeh is visible a great way off in every direction, for it lies high, but when it is reached it proves to be only a rude collection of stone hovels, some broken down, others half underground. There are the remains of a square tower, now used as a dwelling, and the arched doorways of many of the hovels are of hewn stone, relics of better days. There seems to have once been a stronghold here: one of the line of "fortified towns" which anciently stood along all the southern border of Palestine. The number of able-bodied men in the village is about a hundred; and it may assist in realising the oppression of their subjects by Eastern governments, when I state that when the Egyptians held the country before 1840, out of this hundred no fewer than thirty-eight were carried off to serve in distant lands, in the army. Ruined as it is, the village is rich in flocks and herds, and has at least a hundred camels. Yet the country around is very barren. The limestone stands out from the sides and tops of the bald hills in huge sheets and rough masses, giving the whole landscape a ghastly white colour. There are no trees, nor any grain-patches, except at the bottom of the

[1] Judg. vi. 11.

narrow ravines. Still, the flocks and herds showed that even this dreary and forbidding desolation affords good pasture, for they were both fat and sleek; and this very region has been the haunt of shepherds since the days of the patriarchs.

From Dhaheriyeh to El-Dilbeh the track is, in part, very steep and rocky; then comes a broad wady; then more hills and hollows, the hills, however, gradually beginning to show dwarf-oaks, arbutus, and other scrub. The Wady-el-Dilbeh, with its springs of running water, is a delightful relief to the thirsty traveller. There is no village now; but in summer the caves in the hills on each side are used as dwellings by companies of peasants, who migrate to the spot with their flocks and all their belongings, deserting their villages for the time. As Hebron is approached, the hills become more thickly clothed with bushes, while a kind of thyme fills the air with its sweetness. Then follow the vineyards and olive-grounds of the old city, each with its small house or tower of stone for a keeper, though the people of Hebron themselves go out and live in them during the vintage, to such an extent that the town for the time seems almost deserted. Presently, as you ascend another hill, the city comes in sight, lying low down on the sloping side of its valley, mostly facing the south-east; the houses, as I have said, all of stone, high and well built, with windows and flat roofs, dotted with low domes, of which a single dwelling has sometimes two or three, marking the crown of the arched stone chambers below. Hebron has no walls; but there are gates at the entrance of one or two streets which lead from the country. Besides the great Mosque of Machpelah, there is a castle, not high, but with enormously strong walls, parts of which, however, as is usual with any Turkish building, are in ruins. There is also a large khan, or place of rest for traders

and others as they pass through or transact business in Hebron, a stone over the gate stating that it was built in A.D. 1282.

A visit to a tannery in this vicinity showed how the skin bottles of the country are made. On the hill-side north of the mosque was a large tan-yard for the manufacture of water-skins, which, as I have said, are merely the skins of goats, stripped off whole, except at the legs, tail, and neck, the holes of the legs and tail being sewn up, while the neck is left open as a mouth. The skins are first stuffed to the utmost with oak chips, on which a strong solution of oak-bark is then plentifully poured, and the whole left till the hair becomes fixed and the skin tanned. This is all that is done with them. Quantities of these swollen headless and legless skins lay in rows, to the number of not less than 1,500, presenting a very strange spectacle. The price of a bottle varies from about three shillings to eight in our money.

A last look at the valley impresses one with the strange contradictions to be met in Palestine. The hills all round the town look utterly barren, except the one to the south, which is covered with olives; yet the vineyards, and orchards of pear, quince, fig, pomegranate, apricot, and other fruits, had covered miles as I approached at first, from the west. All the hill-sides had been terraced, and every spot of soil among the rocks utilised. But even where thus made artificially fertile, the slopes seemed, from below, a sheet of bare rock, on account of the stone walls of the terraces rising so closely one over the other. In summer, when the leaves are in their glory, the scene must be more attractive; but at no time can vines grown like those of Hebron be picturesque. The one stem from four to six feet high, erect, or bent almost to the ground, with a longer or shorter prop to keep it from actually

touching the earth, and a few shoots from each crown, make only a modest picture.

The threshing-floors of Hebron are on the slopes of the hill, beside the cemetery, on the south-west side of the valley. All who have any grain, of whatever kind, to tread out, make free use of them. Barley, lentils, and vetches, which are grown chiefly for camels, are the first crops ripe, and are laid in heaps till the owners can bring their beasts to pace round over them as they lie spread out in a circle. Nor do they care to finish at once; other calls detain their animals, so that they come to the floor only when it suits them, leaving after two or three hours, since in this climate there is no fear of rain. Sometimes two, or even four beasts are driven round over the grain—donkeys, cattle, or horses, as the owner possesses one or other. None of these animals are muzzled, for it is still against custom to prevent the creatures that tread out the corn from rewarding themselves for their toil by a chance mouthful.[1] The winnowing is done by tossing the trodden straw against the wind with a fork;[2] and the owners of the crops come every night and sleep on their threshing-floors to guard them, just as Boaz did more than three thousand ago.[3]

The people of Hebron, in their higher and lower classes, are, perhaps, the best representation to be found in Palestine of purely Eastern manners. The poor live in a very humble way indeed, mainly on fruit, bread, and vegetables. The rich are more elaborate in their meals. I have described the reception-room of the officer in command of the troops in the south of Palestine, but he was partly Western in his ideas and dress.[4] It is very different with the principal local families. Their mode of living

[1] Deut. xxv. 4; 1 Cor. ix. 9; 1 Tim. v. 18.
[2] Matt. iii. 12; Luke iii. 17.
[3] Ruth iii. 2—14.
[4] See *ante*, p. 327.

may be illustrated as a whole from the details of one dinner, at which several distinguished personages were present. A very large circular tray of tinned copper, placed on a coarse wooden stool about a foot high, served as the table. In the centre of this stood another big tray, with a mountain of pillau, composed of rice, boiled and buttered, with small pieces of meat strewn through and upon it. This was the chief dish, though there were other smaller dishes, both meat and vegetable. Ten persons sat round the table, or rather squatted on the carpet, with their knees drawn up close to their bodies. Each had before him a plate of tinned copper and a wooden spoon, which some used without the plate. Most, however, preferred to use the fingers of the left hand, several dipping their hands together into the dish, as the apostles did at the Last Supper.[1] As soon as anyone had finished, he rose and went into another room, to have water poured over his hands to wash them, and the vacant place at the table was instantly filled by a new-comer.

Such was the dinner provided for three governors, among other grandees. The bread, I may say, was laid on the mat under the tray, so as to be easily reached; and a jar of water, the only beverage used during the meal, stood within reach. Besides rice, stews of beans or cracked wheat, with thicks oup or sauce poured over them, in the great central bowl, are also in fashion. Spoons, though sometimes provided, are often wanting —pieces of the thin bread, doubled, serving instead. Knives and forks are unknown; and as there is no special dining-room, there is no furniture suited for one. Hence tables and chairs are never seen. The meat being always cut up into small pieces, there is no need for a knife, and chickens can easily be torn asunder

[1] Matt. xxvi. 23; Mark xiv. 20.

with the hands. So far, indeed, are Orientals from thinking it strange to dip their fingers into the common dish, that it is a special act of politeness to grope in it for the visitor, and lay nice morsels before him, or even to insist on putting them into his mouth. Chickens are the most common form of animal food met everywhere. A traveller from the West, in fact, gets disgusted with their constant appearance at every meal, especially as he often hears their death-cries only a few minutes before they are served up. "To kill and eat" follows with the same closeness now as in the days of St. Peter,[1] whether it be chickens or anything larger.

[1] Acts x. 13.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE COUNTRY NORTH OF HEBRON.

The road from Hebron to Jerusalem is rough and mountainous, but very direct. Our kind host wished us to stay with him longer, but this being impossible, we sent on our donkeys with the tents, the Turkish soldiers having duly found the wanderers and brought them to Hebron. They had been overtaken by night, they said, at Falujeh, and fearing robbers, had slept there—that is, they had lain down beside their beasts in the dress they wore. A spring runs down from the north side of the hill as you leave Hebron, and makes the track for a time muddy; but this is rather a welcome sight in Palestine. A fringe of grass at the sides, below the broad, low walks of loose stones picked off the small fields, vineyards, &c., which skirted our way, was a lovely green. The path soon after was for a time roughly paved—when, or by whom, is a very hard question to answer; but the stones are now at such angles, and in such heights and hollows, that they would break the legs of any horses not bred in the country. Before long the road became simply fearful, running in the dry bed of a winter torrent strewn with stones of all sizes, in thick masses. Every patch of soil on the bare hill-sides was in some way utilised. Four camels passed us with bags of tallow, then a man with a very primitive gun—a shepherd from the hills. We next came to a well, where there were women in blue cotton, with white cloth over their heads, some drawing water, others pounding household linen

with a stone at a small pool by the well-side; the linen, I fear, sadly wanting their kind offices. Not far from Hebron a small valley ran into the one we were climbing, with fine vineyards growing on terraces up the hills. This has been thought to be the valley of Eshcol, from which the spies brought back the grapes,[1] but, as I have previously said,[2] the fruit must have been gathered much farther south, near Kadesh.

The road, bad though it was, bore every appearance of having always been the highway between Hebron and Jerusalem, for it is direct, and has evidently been made by human labour in a long-past age. It is certain, however, that it could never have been passable for wheels, for they could not be dragged over such a wilderness of boulders and loose stones of all sizes, or up slopes so steep. Nor, indeed, do we hear of wheeled vehicles in the parts south of Jerusalem, except when Joseph sent waggons to bring down his father Jacob to Egypt; and they only came as far as Hebron, whence Jacob, then very old, travelled in them to Beersheba.[3] As in olden times, the ass is the main help for a journey, horses still being few, and mules only used for baggage and other burdens. Big men on diminutive donkeys are seen everywhere, and, at times, a woman and child on the family ass, while the husband walks at the side of his wife. Thus Joseph, it is to be supposed, travelled with the Blessed Virgin from Bethlehem to Egypt, and from Egypt to Nazareth.[4] So, also, rode the ancient kings,[5] and so rode our Lord, as the Son of David, in fulfilment of the words of Zechariah: "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass;" and we are

[1] Num. xiii. 23.
[2] See *ante*, pp. 260, 318.
[3] Gen. xlv. 19, 21, 27; xlvi. 1.
[4] Matt. ii. 14, 21.
[5] Zech. ix. 9; Matt. xxi. 5.

told that Saul rode to the field spear in hand, as peasants on their asses now carry their clubs or guns, and with a small water-jar tied to his rude saddle, as in our day.[1]

About three miles from Hebron a path runs off towards Tekoa; and on this, about five minutes' ride from the road we were following, are two courses of ancient hewn stones, among which one measured fifteen and a half feet long, and three and a third feet thick. There are two such walls, at right angles to each other, apparently the remains of an enclosure, one side of which measures 200 feet, and the other 160. The Jews of Hebron call this "the House of Abraham," regarding it as the spot where the patriarch pitched his tent, and where his famous terebinth-tree grew. Nor is this really improbable, when we see the extreme age of the walls, as shown by their bevel, and by the size of the stones. Besides, the tradition is at least 1,500 years old. When between four and five miles from Hebron, a ruined mosque was pointed out on the right, about three miles from the road, bearing the name of Neby Yunas—"the Prophet Jonah." There is another with the same name, on the coast below Acre, a place natural enough for it; but why there should be a mosque to Jonah near Hebron is not so easy to understand. It shows, at least, how deep a hold the narrative about the prophet obtained on the popular mind. What kind of fish or creature it was that swallowed him has been discussed a thousand times, some insisting that it must have been a whale, since the English Testament says so.[2] But the words used, both in the Old Testament and the New, speak only of a great fish or other sea-monster, leaving the kind entirely an open question. Bochart, in his wonderful "Hierozoicon,"[3] has long ago

[1] 1 Sam. xxvi. 11. [2] *Land and the Book*, p. 68.
[3] *Hieroz.* ii. 742—746.

shown that huge sharks are found in the Mediterranean, able to swallow a man entire, and Dr. Pusey has quoted instances in his elaborate book on the Minor Prophets;[1] but it is not necessary to trouble ourselves with such details. That a human being should have lived for any time in the body of a voracious animal was itself a miracle so great, that there need be no difficulty as to the monster that was able to contain him.[2]

The prophet's gourd has also been the subject of much controversy. St. Jerome thought the word should be "ivy"; and many have fancied that the castor-oil tree is intended. This certainly reaches a considerable size, being found twelve or fifteen feet high in Palestine; but it has widely-open branches, and is indifferently fitted for giving shade. Dr. Tristram, on this ground among others, thinks that the bottle-gourd is meant—a plant very commonly used in Palestine and elsewhere to cover and give cooling shade to arbours. I have often seen it, both in the Holy Land and in America, trained over such shelters, its rapid growth and large leaves admirably adapting it to such a purpose, while the extreme fragility of its stem exposes it to a striking suddenness of decay, should a storm strike it or a caterpillar gnaw its root. One day it may be seen in its glory; the next, it hangs withered and dried up. This would exactly suit the narrative. The prophet's frail booth covered with soft green, as it were in a night, might, before another sunset, be left bare as at first by the violence of a passing wind, or a chance injury to the stem, even from a cause so insignificant as the tooth of a "worm."[3] Dr. Thomson[4] agrees with Canon Tristram in rejecting the castor-oil plant for the gourd, and, indeed, the difficulty could only have arisen from the similarity in

[1] Pusey, *Minor Prophets*—Jonah.
[2] See *ante*, p. 22.
[3] Jonah iv. 5—8.
[4] *Land and the Book*, p. 70.

sound, in the modern languages of Palestine, between the names of the two—"kurah" meaning gourd, and "kurwah" castor-oil plant; while in the Hebrew the gourd is "kikayon;" and in Herodotus the castor-oil plant is "kiki."

Tarshish, to which Jonah's ship was bound, seems to have been the name given originally to the Guadalquivir, in Spain, and to a populous town at its mouth. It is an aboriginal Spanish word rather than a Phœnician; but a Carthaginian—that is, a Phœnician—colony, founded in the neighbourhood, adopted it as the name of the port which became famous as the farthest western harbour of Tyrian sailors in the southern seas of Europe. Ships of large size were hence called "Tarshish ships," whether sailing to that port or not;[1] their dimensions and splendid finish seeming to the Hebrew prophets one of the supreme illustrations of human power and pride.[2] Solomon's ships, trading to Ceylon or East Africa, were also called "Tarshish ships;" and so were those of Jehoshaphat, which were built on the Red Sea.[3] But Jonah's ship was apparently about to sail for Tarshish, in Spain, and must have lain out in the roads at Joppa, having only called there for freight or passengers, after starting from the docks at Tyre. The description of such a vessel in Ezekiel[4] helps us to realise the circumstances of the attempted voyage, though the details given by the prophet may have varied in different ships. The deck was of cypress; the mast, a tall cedar; the helm, oak of Bashan; the oar-benches, of the cypress of Cyprus, inlaid with ivory; the sails, of white Egyptian canvas, gaily embroidered; while the awnings over the quarter-deck, to keep the sun from the cabin-passengers, were of blue and purple. The oarsmen were the famed

[1] Isa. ii. 16; lx. 9.
[2] Isa. xxiii. 1; Ezek. xxvii. 25.
[3] 1 Kings x. 22; xxii. 49.
[4] Ezek. xxvii.

sea-dogs of Sidon and Aradus; the steersmen, from Tyre, had the care of the sails and rigging, and were under the command of a chief steersman, or "master"; the staff of ship-carpenters was from Gebal; and there were, besides, traders, soldiers attached to the ship, and passengers. A wonderful picture of an ocean-going ship of three thousand years ago!

At El-Dirweh, about six miles from Hebron, on the right of the track, a fountain was pouring clear, sparkling water into a stone trough, at a short distance from the ruins of a fortress, the scene of brave deeds in the time of the Maccabees, for it is the site of the ancient Bethsur, a tower bearing that name standing on a low height a little way off the road. Only one side of it is left; but some of the stones are drafted, showing that the masonry is at the oldest Byzantine. There are also hewn stones lying around, and foundations of buildings; but there are no marks of a fortified wall round the station. The tower itself is only about twenty feet square, but its position is very strong, and it commanded, in its day, the great road from the south to Jerusalem. Josephus speaks of it as the strongest fortress in Judæa.[1] Already existing as a village in the time of Joshua, Bethsur was fortified in that of Rehoboam, and its inhabitants, after the exile, helped to rebuild the long-destroyed walls of Jerusalem.[2] A fierce battle once raged all round these hills and gorges, when Judas Maccabæus defeated the Syrian general, Lysias, and was able to strengthen the tower against the Edomites.[3] Nor was this the last time that these rocks were coloured with blood, for the Syrian retook Bethsur, and it was wrested from him once more

[1] Jos. *Ant.*, xiii. 5, 6.
[2] Josh. xiii. 58; 2 Chron. xi. 7; Neh. iii. 16.
[3] 1 Macc. iv. 29, 61; 2 Macc. xi. 5; Jos. *Ant.*, xii. 7, 5.

and made stronger than ever by Simon Maccabæus, the last survivor of the great brothers.[1]

The fountain is only seven minutes' walk from this memorable spot, and issues from beneath a wall of large hewn stones, a runnel from it flowing down the road. On the other side of the track is a small tank lined with cement, as well as a larger and rougher one, uncemented. There are marks of an ancient pavement, now broken and terribly rough, but once, no doubt, very different. The ruins of an ancient church lie near the fountain, with remains of the old wall that enclosed its yard. It has been thought that Bethsur was the scene of the baptism of the eunuch by St. Philip when on the way from Jerusalem to Gaza; but it is much more likely that the incident occurred between Beit Jibrin and Gaza, especially since St. Philip was afterwards found at Ashdod, on the Philistine plain.[2] Bethsur lies 3,180 feet above the sea.

Just after passing it, a wady on the left, with the name Bereikut, recalled the valley of Berachah,[3] the scene of Jehoshaphat's thanksgiving, which the locality exactly suits, as Tekoa is only about three miles off to the east. On a hill to the left stood the hamlet of Jedur, the ancient Gedor.[4] The road lay mostly through a broad valley, with successive swells and hollows, the level still rising, and hills, single or together, shutting in the view east and west. The slopes were mostly covered with scrub-trees and herbs, hiding the bare chalk; and here and there lime-kilns were to be seen, burning or idle. Ruins crowned most of the hill-tops both right and left, and smoke from the charcoal-burners' fires often rose from the bush, but there was nowhere a village on the whole road. Some parts showed ancient terraces, and in one place

[1] 1 Macc. vi. 31, 50; ix. 52; x. 14; xi. 65, 66; xiv. 7, 33.
[2] Acts viii. 38. [3] 2 Chron. xx. 26. [4] Josh. xii. 13.

there were cultivated patches, and even small fields, among the stones; yet, as a whole, the road led through wild desolation. At one point it seemed, indeed, to vanish, leaving only a track, visible perhaps to horses and mules, but beyond my recognition. Climbing the side of a very steep hill, it crept along through a chaos of rocks, with only room enough at some places for my beast to get through without leaving me behind. The valley lay two or three hundred feet below when we reached our highest point; but before us and on both sides the grey barren rocks stretched slowly up, the picture of a desert. To trust the sensible beast I rode was the only security, as it climbed the stony roughness, or dropped its forelegs over some huge boulder. Not seldom the path was hardly broad enough to let the creature pass along without falling over the side; and there was present to my mind the comfortable reflection that, once off, it would roll to an indefinite depth down the wild steep. The broad glen, far below, was at this part more or less cultivated; and no doubt there was some road through it, but my guide had taken a short cut over the mountains, to his own delight perhaps, but certainly not to mine.

Once more on a safe level, we found ourselves in the midst of a great number of Russian pilgrims on their way to Juttah, the birth-place of St. John the Baptist. There were some priests among them with the strange brimless hat of the Greek Church, and the flowing beard of which its clergy are all so proud. Most of the pilgrims were of middle age, and the two sexes were equally well represented. Fur caps, thick woollen coats, trousers, petticoats, and heavy boots, seemed very ill suited to the climate; but they would at least withstand the wear and tear of the long journey from Russia and back. Many carried pots and cooking vessels; some, bundles of house-

hold gear; and all were comfortably, if roughly, equipped. They had no doubt come from Constantinople to Joppa in a Russian steamer, enduring what to us would be intolerable hardships, and were now proposing to return to Jerusalem in time for Easter, and then to go down to the Jordan and dip in its sacred waters, finding their way back to Russia as they best could, after having completed this long pilgrimage. So, in ancient days, had there come to Jerusalem "Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven,"[1] to keep the Passover, the Easter of the Hebrew.

The hills on each side of the valley, beyond this, were covered with bushes, through which the remains of ancient terraces showed themselves; but a ruined village, with olive-trees and some ploughed land round it, and a rain-water pond, were almost the only signs that the land was still in some parts inhabited. A little further on, where a valley crossed our path at right angles, making a wide open space, we reached the famous reservoirs known as Solomon's Pools. The three huge cisterns thus designated are built of squared stones, and bear marks of the highest antiquity. They lie one below the other, at a height of 2,600 feet above the sea, at the west end of the narrow Wady Urtas, which runs east and west across the track by which we had come from Hebron. In a place so lonely, these vast structures fill the mind with wonder. They are separated from one another by only a short interval, and the bottom of each is higher than the top of the one below it. The upper pool has the great length of 380 feet, and is 229 feet broad at the west, and 236 at the east end, while its depth is twenty-five feet. The middle pool, however, is no less than 423 feet long, 160 feet broad at the west, and 250 at the east end, and its

[1] Acts ii. 5.

depth is thirty-nine feet. But the lowest pool is the largest of the three, measuring 582 feet in length, 148 feet broad at the west, and 207 at the east end, with a depth of fifty feet. The depth, I may say, is in each case that of the lower, or eastern, end. Between the surfaces of the upper and middle pools there is a distance of 160 feet, and the lower pool is 248 feet from the middle one, so that this gigantic series of reservoirs extends, in all, to the great distance of 1,793 feet, or more than the third of a mile. The inside and the bed of all three, so far as can be seen, are lined with cement, which, however, has broken away in some places, while in others it has evidently been repaired. Flights of steps at the corners and the middle lead to the water, and huge steps along the sides at the bottom, leave a central channel of extra depth, in which the bare rock shows itself in many places. Water stood in the upper and middle pools, but the lower one was dry. The steps at the sides, along the bottom, are cut in the native rock, but I did not attempt to go down to them, as they were largely covered with the jelly of decayed water-weeds, beds of which floated in the pools. The lower pool is connected with the second by a steep channel, through which, however, there was no water running; but a steady flow came into the second pool from an opening connecting it with the first. The walls must be immensely strong to have stood firm for so many centuries; but, of course, they are in reality only a facing to the rock, out of which all the cisterns have been hewn.

Immediately to the north-west of the Pools is an abandoned, straggling fort, built by the Saracens, and known as El-Burak. Two or three men were living in the rude chambers inside the gate, and some poor Arabs had sought temporary shelter in the wide, forsaken

interior, which is square and devoid of buildings. Herds and flocks evidently made use of it as a spacious fold. In its day the fort had helped to protect the Pools, but this service is no longer necessary. Grass and flowers sprinkled the ground outside, but the slopes north and south, closing in the valley, were unusually wild and bare; the winter storms, unchecked by trees or shrubs, having washed down all the soil and left the hill-sides strewn with great blocks of stone in the wildest confusion.

The Wady Urtas sinks steeply from west to east, the direction of the Pools; so that, had one pool been made instead of three, the wady must have been dammed by a gigantic wall—if, indeed, any structure could have resisted the weight of such a body of water as would thus have accumulated. But even to hew out the three separate pools must have been a wonderful undertaking, especially in an age when science was so imperfect that it has left one end of each excavation broader than the other, apparently from inability to follow a straight line. Indeed, there are many indications of imperfect engineering, though the effect, as a whole, is so striking. Tradition ascribes the enterprise to Solomon, and we know that he had great gardens near Jerusalem, and a pleasure-palace, to which he drove out in royal pomp. These, it may be, were in Wady Urtas, watered by the abundant streams from the Pools. Perhaps it is of these, and in this very place, that the Beloved sings: "Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices may flow out.[1] Let my beloved come into his garden and eat his precious fruits." Perhaps it was in these delicious retreats that he sang of his bride as "a garden barred, a spring shut up, a fountain

[1] Cant. iv. 16: rather "that its fragrance may spread abroad."

sealed," and compared her to a paradise-garden of pomegranates and all kinds of noble fruits, henna, with spikenard plants, spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all kinds of incense-bearing trees, myrrh and aloes, and all the best of spices.[1] The beauty of the Wady Urtas lower down makes it easy to think that the famous king enjoyed the glories of spring in its bosom. We read of him, "I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and parks; and I planted trees in them, of all kinds of fruits; I made me pools of water, to water therefrom the fruit where trees were reared."[2] Why may not these pools be those of Urtas? They may well have been the work of that ancient time; their very defects, in some respects, being an indirect evidence of their antiquity, for while the supreme triumphs of Hebrew architecture were carried out by the help of skilled Tyrian architects and masons, those in which only native skill could be employed would naturally be less perfect. We see an illustration of this in the subterranean rock conduit at Siloam, dating, it is thought, from the reign of Hezekiah, for the workmen, beginning at both ends, have missed each other's approach, so as to need a cross-opening to effect a junction. It is quite possible, then, that these huge excavations are a memorial of the labour exacted by Solomon from his people, the bitterness of which led, under Rehoboam, to the revolt of the Ten Tribes.[3]

The supply of these great reservoirs was derived from four springs, one of which flows underground into the west, or upper pool, through a vault; the second is said to bubble up from beneath the bottom of the Pools; the third runs through a small channel, partly of stones, partly of stoneware pipes, from the hill-side south-east of

[1] Cant. iv. 12—14. [2] Eccles. ii. 4 ff. [3] 1 Kings xii.

the fort: a clear, bright stream, with which I quenched my thirst, at a gap in the top of its square stone bed. The fourth rises inside the old castle. There was, besides, a high-level aqueduct which brought water down a long wady from the south, partly the flow of a spring now dried up, but also the surface drainage of the hills, for provision was made that nothing should be lost. But the chief of all these sources is that which rises on the hill-side, about 200 paces west of the upper pool, and flows into it, as I have said, through a vault; its subterranean course leading to a popular belief that it is the "sealed fountain" of Solomon's Song.

In former times, when the whole water system of which the Pools were the centre was perfect, a great aqueduct, the continuation of that which stretched for nearly ten miles from the south, ran under the Pools, receiving additional supplies from them, and was led on, by a winding course, along the hill-sides, past Bethlehem, to the Temple space in Jerusalem. The portion of this great work which lies south of the Pools is apparently very old, the channel being sometimes cut in the rocks, and at one place tunnelled through them. For the most part, however, it is formed of strong masonry, sometimes six or eight feet high, and faced with ashlar; the waterway varying from eighteen inches to two feet in breadth, and from a foot to two and a half feet in depth, lined throughout with strong cement, and covered with loose slabs of stone. Under the Pools the water flowed in stoneware pipes, with air-holes at intervals, to relieve the pressure.

There were, moreover, according to Mr. Drake, four other aqueducts connected with the Pools and the Valley of Urtas: one which entered Jerusalem near the Joppa Gate, at a high level; another, now quite ruined, which

stretched in the same direction; a third to supply villages to the eastward; while the fourth was led, apparently by Herod, towards his famous fortress and city of Herodium, now the Frank Mountain, to water the gardens with which he beautified the neighbourhood. The officers of the Palestine Survey think that all these gigantic works date from the Roman period. Some of them, indeed, are very probably the identical conduits of which Josephus speaks, as built by Pontius Pilate with money taken from the Temple treasury, and therefore sacred, as "corban," or devoted to God. This effort, however, to benefit the city involved Pilate in more hatred than all his other acts, it being regarded as a sacrilegious robbery of Church funds. But, though Roman governors may have added to works they found already in existence, and perhaps repaired dilapidations which may have been extensive, why should Josephus have mentioned Pilate as having made only one aqueduct, which was an undertaking so much less magnificent than the Pools, if they themselves were his work or that of any other Roman? From the roofing of portions of the aqueducts with half-formed arches, and from the look of the fragments of the great one, near Jerusalem, being so much more ancient than the Roman style, I cannot refrain from the belief that though the contemporaries of our Lord may have repaired or added to existing structures, the glory of hewing out the huge Pools belongs to the great Hebrew king, Solomon, and that they form a splendid relic of his peaceful greatness.

Such works for the supply of water to Jerusalem and the country east of Urtas may well excite astonishment in the present condition of Palestine. It has been noticed, however, by Canon Tristram that aqueducts are found not only in a district like this, where nearness to the capital might explain their presence, but in places

which have, for ages, been unpeopled and desolate. They span in many places the profound gorges between Jerusalem and Quarantania; we find traces of them at Engedi, on the Dead Sea; they are still visible at different parts of the dismal wilderness of Judæa. Indeed, even in the wadys at the south-west corner of the Dead Sea we find traces of carefully-cemented conduits, once supplying cisterns which are still perfect, and may some day restore fertility, after ages of neglect, to regions which need only water to blossom like the rose.[1]

The village of Urtas lies near the bottom of the valley, about a mile east of the Pools, clinging, in ruin, to the south slope, which is both steep and bare, like all the scenery around. There are still some inhabitants, who live, for the most part, in hovels on the hill-side, unfit for human dwellings. A few trees grow amidst the houses, which are flat-roofed, and roughly built of stones, but showing every stage of dilapidation. Except for the climate, such a place would, in fact, be uninhabitable. Yet this seems to have been the site of Etam, where Solomon had his royal gardens, with streams running through them. Rehoboam, also, thought Etam worth fortifying, along with Bethlehem and Tekoa.[2] There are still, indeed, the foundations of a square tower—a low, broad wall of large squared stones; and the rocks are in some places hewn and scarped: evidences of a military post, with its defences, in olden days. One attraction yet exists which may account for the importance once attached to a spot now so miserable: a fountain sends forth an abundant supply of fine water, which flows in a bright, murmuring stream, all the year round, down the valley. In such a thirsty land, it may well have delighted both Solomon and his foolish son,

[1] *Pict. Palestine*, i. 141. [2] 2 Chron. xi. 6

and no doubt it might, even now, if utilised as it should be, make Wady Urtas a paradise. It is, however, used to some extent, for along its sides are gardens of citrons, pomegranates, figs, oranges, and even pears, apples, and cherries, intermingled with plots in which grow cauliflowers, turnips, potatoes, and other vegetables. Shut in by steep slopes of grey rock, which are sprinkled at one spot with the dilapidated hovels of the village, this greenery is all the more delightful on that account, and serves to show what the place may have been in Solomon's day.

Insect life was already quickening in the sun, and ants were busy, as always in warm weather, at their multifarious occupations. Was it here that the Wise Man noticed them, and wrote, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard: consider her ways, and be wise; which having no chief,[1] overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest"?[2] Modern science has felt a difficulty in these words, since the ant does not live on grain, but on flesh, insects, and the sweet sap or other exudations of trees, which it could not store up for winter use, and since it sleeps during winter, in all but very hot climates. The truth is, we must not look in Scripture for science, which was unknown in early ages, for it is not the purpose of Revelation to teach it, and the sacred writers, in this as in other matters of a similar kind, were left to write according to the popular belief of their day. We find the same idea in another passage of the same book. "There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: the ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer."[3] It was universally believed in antiquity that ants did so, and even Dr. Thomson, in "The Land and the Book,"

[1] Or "judge." [2] Prov. vi. 6—8. [3] Prov. xxx. 24, 25.

and Neil, in his "Palestine Explored," cling to the idea.[1] Ants do, indeed, fill their nests with many things, but it is to pad them warmly, and keep themselves from the damp earth; and hence, though they are undoubtedly assiduous in harvest-time in carrying off grains of corn, chaff, grass, seeds, and vegetable husks of all kinds, they do so to make their underground rooms comfortable, not to lay up food for a season during which, in many parts, they eat nothing. Anyone may see the proof of this for himself by opening an ants' nest. He will find everything to make it warm, but the supposed "stores" are left quite untouched.

It is not certain, indeed, that in Palestine ants hibernate, for they may be seen—at least in the warm district round the Dead Sea—busy on the tamarisk-trunks, seeking their food, even in January. The mistake is similar to that which prevails very generally, even in our own day, as to ants' eggs, which is the name popularly given, both in England and Germany, to the *pupæ*, or ants in process of transformation into the perfect insect. They then closely resemble grains of corn, and are carried out daily by their nurses to enjoy the heat of the sun, and taken in again before evening. Who that has broken into an ants' nest, by accident or intentionally, has not seen the workers rushing off with these white, egg-like bodies, in trembling haste, to bear them to a place of security? But if we nowadays make a popular mistake in thinking these to be eggs, how much more natural was it that erroneous ideas, on another point of ant-life, should obtain three thousand years ago! Mr. Neil's experience, indeed, shows how easily a mistake might arise. While encamped, about the middle of March, near Tiberias, on the Lake of Galilee, he noticed a line of large, black ants marching towards their nest,

[1] *Land and the Book*, p. 509; *Palestine Explored*, p. 76.

each laden with a grain of barley, larger and longer than itself, so that they looked like a moving multitude of barleycorns. This line, he found, extended to a spot where some of the corn for his beasts had been spilt by the mule-drivers, or had fallen from the nosebags, and was now being appropriated by the ants. That they should carry it off, seemed at once to justify the supposition that they were doing so to lay up food for the winter, and yet, as I have said, nothing is more certain than that ants do not eat dried barley or any other dry grain.

CHAPTER XVIII.

URTAS.

In the valley of Urtas, and on the hills, flocks of sheep and goats, mingled together, were feeding, as Laban's flocks used to do long ago under the care of Jacob;[1] the sheep, of course, all broad-tailed; that is, with a great mass of fat, in the middle of which the tail runs down like a dividing line, projecting from it at the lower end. There were also a few camels, and some cattle, so that on these apparently barren hill-sides there was nourishment for even the larger animals. The gardens ceased before the pasturage began; the gravelly soil soon drinking up the sweet rivulet which had been brawling over the pebbles and stones.

Tekoa, and also the Frank Mountain, where Herod the Great was buried, could both be visited better from Urtas than from any other point. It is a steady climb from the bottom of the wady to the table-land above; the track leading to the right, and the pleasant companionship of one of the old aqueducts, still supplying Jerusalem, brightens part of the journey. At one place, a spring pours out through two mouths under a canopy, its waters in part supplying Bethlehem; water-carriers were filling their skins at it, and carrying them to the town. This stream, no doubt, was once connected with the aqueduct that led from Solomon's Pools to the forecourts of the

[1] Gen. xxx. 35.

Temple at Jerusalem. The aqueduct is still perfect for some distance; its bed measures about a foot deep and the same in width, with a covering of flat stones, which, however, was gone in some places, giving man and beast a highly-prized opportunity of quenching their thirst. The conduit was, in fact, exactly like that which I had seen on the north side of the Pools, and from which I had drunk; indeed, it was a continuation of it.

The hills between Urtas and El-Fureidis—a diminutive of the Arabic word for Paradise—are very desolate and scorched, but had once been carefully terraced and cultivated. The mountain honoured by Herod as the site of his fortress rises steep and round—300 or 400 feet above the plain—like the cone of a volcano from which the top has been cut away. Yet it is only 190 feet higher than the village of Urtas, so that if the road had ascended for part of the way, there must have been a descent for the rest of it—the beginning of the slope towards the Jordan. This isolated height, Josephus tells us, Herod raised still higher, or, at least, filled up and trimmed to suit his design, erecting on the flat space at the top a great Roman castle, with rounded towers, and providing within it a magnificent palace for himself. The fortress was reached by a wonderful stairway of hewn stone, 200 steps high. At the foot of the hill other grand palaces were built for himself and his friends, and the whole plain around was covered with houses, forming a large town in the Italian style, with all the advantages of Western civilisation and refinement; the castle protecting the whole.

The name of "the Little Paradise," which the place still bears, may have arisen from the beauty of the gardens, no less than of the town, for, as I have said, Herod brought a plentiful stream from the Pools of Solomon, to irrigate

the soil and supply every want of the community, in an age when public and private baths were considered a first necessity of life. He had defended himself bravely against the Parthians at this spot, when pursued by Antigonus, and had been forced to flee from Masada, where his brother Joseph had command, and to seek refuge, first in Egypt and then in Rome. On his triumphant return, however, he resolved to fortify a spot not only dear to him from the memory of his escape from great peril, but also of high importance as commanding the gorges towards the Dead Sea. Here, also, he was at last buried with great pomp,[1] his body being carried to its last resting-place[2] from Jericho, to which he had gone very shortly before his death from the warm baths of Callirrhoë, on the other side of the Dead Sea.

A steep ascent of ten minutes, on foot, brings one to the top of the hill, where the flat surface of the ground forms a space about 750 feet round. The whole of this is enclosed by the ruins of a circular fortress of hewn stones, with four massive round towers, standing, one at each of the cardinal points. Inside, the ground slopes to a hollow in the centre, as if the walls had been built on an artificial mound. There are no escarpments on the hill, as on that of Samaria, for though there are remains of terraces round the lower part of it, they have evidently been rather for cultivation than defence. The tradition of the locality is that Herod was buried at the foot of the hill, beside the great public reservoir; and a mound, which may one day repay a search, stands now in the centre of a long-dried pool. After the fall of Jerusalem, the Roman general took Herodium without resistance, and with this incident it passes from history. Since

[1] Geikie, *Life and Words of Christ*, i. 36—43.
[2] *Ibid.*, i. 249.

then, however, the legend arose from which it got its present name in Western Europe—the Frank Mountain—the Crusaders being fabled to have held it against the Saracens for forty years after Jerusalem had been wrested from them. But, as Irby and Mangles remark,[1] "the place is too small ever to have contained half the number of men which would have been requisite to make any stand in such a country; and the ruins, though they might be those of a spot once defended by the Franks, appear to have had an earlier origin, as the architecture seems to be Roman."

The view from the top is very wide towards the north, but less so towards the south and west. The Mount of Olives stands out as if close at hand, and on each side of it the eye notes hill beyond hill, each a venerable site. To the east and south the landscape is especially interesting, as that of the region consecrated by the story of David and St. John the Baptist. To the south stretches a desolate succession of earth-waves, sinking towards both south and east; their colour dark grey; their outline relieved by no tree or verdure, for the sparse growth to be seen here and there is dried up till it is brown, instead of green. Ruins on the hills add artificial to natural desolation, and the sense of this is deepened by the knowledge that these ridges of forbidding barrenness are, in many cases, the walls of yawning ravines, into whose depths the sunshine falls only in a passing gleam, as it crosses the narrow opening above. To the east, the same desert loneliness and lifeless silence prevail, till the eye rests on the blue waters of the Dead Sea, 3,000 feet below where you stand. Near you, the long undulations of rock, broken into countless gorges and small valleys, are like nothing so much as rudely crumpled, coarse, dark greyish-brown paper. You have

[1] *Travels*, p. 340.

immediately before you the home of the viper, the locust, the wild bee, the fox, the jackal, the partridge, and the wild goat; for ages it has been shunned by man. Beyond this foreground, still looking eastwards, light, pinkish-yellow hills succeed, ridge beyond ridge, sinking ever lower and lower, till through their clefts the Dead Sea carries the eye across its deep blue to the light red or purple mountains of Moab, rising some hundreds of feet above the hills on this side, and seamed into wide ravines by the torrents of innumerable winters.

Over this wild, inhospitable region, David wandered when a shepherd, for no landscape in Palestine is so rocky or barren as not to afford pasture to wandering flocks of sheep and goats, either on the slopes or in the ravines. Here, also, he lived with his 400 outlaws, when hunted like a partridge by Saul; hiding in the caves so numerous in every ravine, or in one or other of the countless valleys or gorges which cut up the face of the country into so tangled a network or labyrinth that the whole district has been a favourite haunt, in all ages, of those who, from any cause, desired security from the interference of the outside world. Here, also, St. John the Baptist spent long years of solitary musing on the things of God, till his soul kindled into irresistible ardour, which drove him forth among men to plead with them to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. During the hot months it is a land of scorpions, lizards, and snakes, so that his experience readily supplied him with a comparison for his wicked contemporaries, whom he denounced as "a generation of vipers."[1] Wild bees make their combs in the hollows of the limestone rocks; the aromatic thymes, mints, and other labiate plants, sprinkled over the face of the wilderness, furnishing them with honey, which is more

[1] Matt. iii. 1, 5—7; Luke iii. 3, 7.

plentiful in the wilderness of Judæa than in any other part of Palestine. They thus provided for him a main article of his diet, while in one wady or another, or in some cleft, there was always water enough to quench his thirst. Locusts, the other article of his food, are never wanting in this region, and, indeed, are to this day eaten by the Arabs in the south-east of Judæa, the very district where John lived; by those of the Jordan valley, and by some tribes in Gilead. They stew them, as we have seen, with butter, and travellers say—for I myself have never tasted them—that they are very like shrimps in flavour.

Locusts, thus always found in the wilderness of Judæa, multiply sometimes, as every reader of the Bible knows, into vast swarms, and betake themselves to the cultivated parts of the country. Canon Tristram came on such an invading host at the banks of the Jordan, in 1864—5. "The swarms, then in a larva or wingless state," he tells us, "marched steadily up the trees which fringed the river, denuding them of every strip of foliage, and even of the tender bark, not sparing the resinous tamarisk. As they stripped the twigs they marched onwards, pushed by the hordes behind, and fell by myriads into the rapid stream, where they were at once eaten in thousands by the fish."[1] The Rev. Canon Holland also gives us a vivid description of a visitation of locusts which he encountered. "On April 5th, when we were encamped at the fort of Jebel Musa (Mount Sinai)," he says, "the locusts were first seen by us. A light breeze from the north-west was blowing, and they came up, in its face, from the south-east, flying steadily against it, many of them at a great height. They soon increased in number, and as their glazed wings glanced in the sun, they had the appearance of a snow-storm. Many settled on the

[1] *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 314.

ground, which was soon, in many places, quite yellow with them, and every blade of green soon disappeared. For two days the flight passed over our heads, undiminished in numbers. They did not appear to be able to fly much against the wind, their wings being blown across if they got their tail to leeward, and then they came spinning down to the ground; when they alighted they always faced the wind. On the third morning, the flight had diminished much in numbers, but many were still passing over, and as we walked along, clouds of them rose before us. They were difficult to catch, except in the early morning, when they seemed benumbed with cold, before the sun had risen. We found them all over the peninsula, wherever we went."

"In vain," says the same writer, "the Arabs in charge of the convent gardens beat iron pans, and shouted, and brushed them away from the beds, with palm-leaves; they swarmed in, till every green thing was eaten."

In Palestine locusts, by means of their ovipositors, lay their eggs, before the rainy season begins, in holes and cracks of the earth; and these, if they have escaped their numerous enemies, are hatched in spring, to the number of one hundred or more for each mother-locust. In April and May the insects are as large as flies, and cover the earth with a black, moving mass of larvæ, such as Canon Tristram describes, even more hurtful than the full-grown insect. In two months they are four times as large as in May, and, having rapidly grown to the size of the common grasshopper, march on in a straight line, crawling at first, but afterwards leaping, as they get older; their path like the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them like a desolate wilderness.[1] It is as if "a fire devoured" everything green as they advanced; and their

[1] Joel ii. 3.

track, when they have passed, is as if utterly burned up.[1] Fields of standing wheat and barley, vineyards, mulberry orchards, groves of olive, fig, and other trees, are in a few hours stripped of every green blade and leaf, the very bark being often destroyed, so that, as Joel says, "the twigs are made white."[2] They cover the face of the ground, as of old, during the Plagues of Egypt, so that the earth is hidden by them,[3] and, as Canon Holland says, they sweep on in such numbers that they take days to pass. In 1881, 250 tons of locusts were destroyed by the English in Cyprus, each ton containing over 90,000,000 of these pests.[4] When they fly, the light shines like a yellow haze through the swarm. Quiet at night, they weigh down the bushes and hedges till the sun revives them, and then they set forward again on their awful progress.[5] They have no king, as the Book of Proverbs tells us,[6] "yet they go forth, all of them," as in an ordered march. Nothing turns them aside. As in the Egyptian plague, "they fill the houses" of rich and poor alike;[7] "they run up any wall that opposes them, they climb up upon the houses, they enter in at the windows," so that in many cases, as at Nazareth in 1865, the inhabitants have to give up their dwellings to them. Impelled by blind instinct, they do not even seek to avoid any pool or stream in their path, but walk or leap steadily on, and are either entirely swept away or gradually form a bridge over which those behind may cross in safety. The dead bodies, in such cases, often cause a pestilence, as in the visitation mentioned in Joel.[8]

[1] Joel ii. 3.
[2] Deut. xxviii. 38, 39, 42; Ps. lxxviii. 46; Joel **i. 7.**
[3] Exod. x. 5.
[4] Geikie, *Hours with the Bible*, iv. 157.
[5] Nah. iii. 17.
[6] Prov. xxx. 27.
[7] Exod. x, 6; Joel **ii. 9.**
[8] Joel ii. 20.

When they have acquired wings, which they do in June, or the beginning of July,[1] they naturally betake themselves to the air, through which they pass like a cloud,[2] with a noise which no one can forget who has once heard it.[3]

By the Mosaic Law locusts were reckoned "clean," so that St. John the Baptist, a strict Jew, could lawfully eat them. Winged creatures that go on four legs were forbidden, but the Hebrews might eat such as had two legs rising above the four feet, for the purpose of leaping. "Even these of them ye may eat, the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the *chargol* [another kind of locust] after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind."[4] There are no fewer than nine words in the Bible for the locust in its different stages, or in its different varieties: some of these words, however, are incorrectly translated in our English version. Thus the "beetle" in Leviticus xi.[5] is a kind of locust, and so is the "grasshopper" in the same verse. The "palmer-worm"[6] is, perhaps, the migratory locust in its larva state, and so, apparently, are the "cankerworm"[7] and the "caterpillar."[8]

When these terrible destroyers visit a district, great fires are lighted to keep them from the fields or gardens; ditches are dug, into which they walk, and can thus be destroyed, and birds follow and feed on them greedily.

[1] Wetzstein (Delitzsch, *Hohl. u. Pred.*, p. 446) says that as a rule the locusts are seen creeping about in Syria in the middle of March, and develop so quickly that they begin to reproduce by the middle of April.

[2] Joel ii. 5, 10; Rev. ix. 9.

[3] Joel ii. 5.

[4] Lev. xi. 20, 22.

[5] Lev. xi. 22. The word occurs only this once, and so also does "the bald locust" in this verse.

[6] Joel i. 4, &c.

[7] Joel i. 4, &c. This is also translated "caterpillar" (Ps. cv. 34, &c.).

[8] Ps. lxxviii. 46.

They are often finally banished, for the season, by a continuance of cold rainy weather, with moist air, which is fatal both to the eggs in the ground, and to the insects in their various stages. The wind, also, is not unfrequently a deliverer. Flying swarms are powerless against it, becoming an image of helplessness used by the Psalmist when he says, "I am tossed up and down as the locust."[1] Hence they are often carried into the sea, or into rivers, as in the case of the locust plague on the Nile, or the visitation in Joel;[2] their putrefying bodies, as I have said, not seldom causing pestilence.

That David should have roamed as shepherd and outlaw over the region south of the Frank Mountain, led, in the age of the Crusades, to the belief that the Cave of Khureitun, in a wady about a mile south of the site of Herodium, was no other than the famous Cave of Adullam, which, however, as we have seen, has been discovered further to the west.[3] The ride to Khureitun carries us deeper into the utter barrenness of the wilderness of Judæa, unrelieved by a tree or a shrub; the few tufts of dwarf plants showing almost the only visible life in the thousands of white snails which feed on them, and are, in their turn, the food of the larks and other desert birds. The whole country is found to be ploughed by the rains of millenniums into countless gorges running in all directions: occasionally mere precipitous gaps in the soft chalky marl; sometimes white valleys, divided from each other only by towering walls of rock; but altogether a bewildering labyrinth, across which no direct travel is possible.

Khureitun is said to have received its name from a hermit of the fourth century, St. Chariton, who took up his abode in this valley as an anchorite, in gratitude for his

[1] Ps. cix. 23. [2] Exod. x. 19; Joel ii. 20. [3] See *ante*, p. 108.

having escaped from robbers while travelling through it. It was a wild place in which to choose a home, but in those days of ascetic piety, the more savage a locality, the greater its attractions. Already, in the time of Christ, there were, perhaps, 4,000 such anchorites in Palestine, living in colonies, however; not alone. They had, perhaps, borrowed their idea of an isolated life, devoted to the strict observation of Rabbinical precepts, from the Therapeutæ of Egypt, although the East has always favoured such a form of religious zeal. We hear of one Judas who lived as a hermit somewhere in Judæa, about 110 years before Christ, and from his day they multiplied, till after the fall of Jerusalem they were to be found everywhere, but especially to the east.

With such modes of thought prevailing among numbers of the intensely religious, it is not to be wondered at that there were ascetics in the Christian Church from the first, or that it is related of St. James, the brother of our Lord, that throughout his life he followed the self-denying rules of the Nazarites. In the persecution under Decius—in the middle of the third century—multitudes fled to the deserts and mountains to escape the storm; imitating the example of St. John the Baptist and others of Christ's day, and adding seclusion from the world, for the purposes of religious meditation, to the mortified life then much in favour. Before long this new form of self-sacrifice became almost a craze, so that the deserts bordering on Egypt, and those in or near Palestine, abounded with hermits or monks; the hermits living each in a separate cell, and passing a solitary life; the monks, as members of a settlement who lived in common.[1] The caves which abound in Palestine were used in early ages as dwellings; some parts of the country, as we

[1] Bingham, *Christ. Ant.*, iii. 50.

have seen, showing this rude mode of life even now. They were not, however, very largely employed for this purpose by the Jews, though a cave, used as a store-house or manger, was often connected with the dwelling. They were mostly reserved for tombs, as may be seen from the shelves for the dead hewn out in their sides. There was very little land that was not rocky; burial-grounds were unknown, and everyone could so easily obtain some cave in which to lay his dead, that the cases of Rachel and Joseph are the only ones in which we read of another form of sepulture. But this habit had in great measure ceased when the Jews were driven from their native land, and the caves, so far as shepherds had not appropriated them for folds, were free to hermits who might choose to make them a dreary home. Hence St. Chariton lived and died in the cave now long known by his name.

The Wady Khureitun, though comparatively broad towards the north, soon shrinks into a narrow gorge, which might almost be called a fissure in the hills; its sides towering in precipices several hundred feet high. The layers of rock are perfectly level, and have been weathered and worn at the edges till a steep slope of fragments has covered up their face to a good height; their broad bands running along, above, like the walls of terraces. High up, on the southern side, stands a ruined tower, once square, and above and below it are the hovels of the village of Khureitun, which cling to a slope so steep and so entirely unprotected that it is a wonder anyone can live there. That young children, at least, do not roll down the abyss at the very doors of the cabins, shows that they must be able to hold on like flies. The mouth of the cave is beyond the village, and considerably lower; the latter standing on the top of the cliff; the former

opening from its face. There is no approach to the cave, except by a narrow ledge, from which you look down to the bottom of the gorge, far below; and to make matters worse a great rock, turned on edge, almost bars you from finally reaching it. This must be got over as it best can, and then, at last, a narrow, low, and dark passage winds in tediously, with small caves on each side, till the great cave is reached.

You then find yourself in a huge cavern, deep in the hill, 120 feet long, and forty feet wide, rising in great natural arches. Woe to the traveller who has not taken the precaution to bring lanterns to protect his lights, for the bats which make this dark vacuity their home, scared by the brightness, dash wildly hither and thither, in thousands, driving against your face, and especially against the candles, if they are bare. In that case, they are inevitably extinguished in a few moments. From the central cave numerous passages branch out in all directions, to be crossed, very soon, by others at right angles, the whole forming a labyrinth never hitherto fully explored. One of the galleries is 100 feet long, and all are about four feet high, and three feet wide—partly natural, partly artificial—and all on one level. There is, however, in some of the smaller caves, a sloping passage which leads to a series of chambers underneath. Niches are found in many of the inner caverns, and fragments of stone coffins, and funeral urns, show that they have been used as resting-places for the dead, as well as for cells of the living. The air is pure and good.

This vast system of caverns and passages was, doubtless, originally formed by water absorbing the carbonic acid gas in the limestone, and thus setting free the particles of the rock, so that the entire hill was gradually hollowed out into these strange natural excavations. They could

never have been used by David and his men as their stronghold, if only on account of the dampness and the want of light. They swarm, moreover, with scorpions during the hot months; and as to bats, they seem the headquarters of the tribe for this district.

The ruins of Tekoa lie two miles to the south-west, on the top of a hill, about 2,600 feet above the sea. Leaving the gorge of Khureitun, you gradually climb to the plateau of the wilderness, over which, by a track now rising, now sinking, Tekoa is easily reached. Its ruins, which cover the broad top of a gently-sloping hill over an area of four or five acres, consist chiefly of the foundations of houses, once of squared stones, some of them bevelled in the Jewish style. The wreck of a large square castle rises high above all; and there are also some remains of a Greek church, with several fragments of columns, once supporting its roof, and, what is more touching, a baptismal font of rose-coloured limestone, which might easily be taken for marble. Numerous cisterns have been hewn out of the rock, and there is a running spring within a short distance.

This was the spot to which Joab sent for the "wise woman" who should inveigle David to recall his worthless son, Absalom.[1] An open village in these earlier days, it was afterwards fortified by Rehoboam, in his anxiety to keep at least the fragment of his father's empire still left him after the defection of the Ten Tribes; and here, in the closing years of the Northern Kingdom, was born the Prophet Amos. That he was a shepherd may be easily realised, for this district is now the territory of a tribe of Arabs whose flocks of sheep and goats are often driven over the seemingly bare hills around, and manage to pick herbage enough to keep them in good condition, though

[1] 2 Sam. xiv. 2; 2 Chron. xi. 6; xx. 20; Amos i. 1; 1 Macc. ix. 33.

English sheep, I fear, would starve on such pasture. A belt of table-land surrounds Tekoa upon most sides, and is to some extent ploughed and sown; a few patches of grain reappearing each spring. It was to the wilderness stretching away to the west, or rather to the broad hollow lying below it, in that direction—the best pasture-ground near—that Jehoshaphat led forth his fighting men, headed by a chorus of Levites, and found his enemies fled, having quarrelled amongst themselves. It was hither, also, after the death of their magnificent brother Judas Maccabæus, that Jonathan, Simon, and John fled from Bacchides, the Syrian general before whom Judas had fallen.[1] The unfortunate John, however, was taken prisoner, and all his band were carried off, by a force of Ammonites from Medeba,[2] across the Jordan. He had been sent by his brother to the south of the Dead Sea, to make friendly arrangements with the Nabathæans, when he and his company were thus cut off. But while Simon and Jonathan still lay round this very Tekoa, they had a romantic and terrible revenge for their brother's fate. Word came to them that a grand marriage had been arranged between the Ammonite leader's daughter and some great man west of the Jordan, and that the bride was being led from Medeba, with a splendid retinue, befitting "the daughter of one of the great princes of Canaan." "Therefore they remembered John, their brother, and went up [from the valley] and hid themselves under cover of the mountains," to await their prey. And now, as "they lifted up their eyes, and looked, behold, there was much ado," and a long train of camels and other beasts, laden with all that would show the rank and wealth of the bride; "and the bridegroom came forth, and his friends and brethren, to meet them, with timbrels and instruments of music, and many weapons;" and no doubt

[1] B.C. 159. [2] This is Grimm's emendation, and it seems just.

they had a glad time, as the two parties saluted each other, and joined in one grand cavalcade, to lead the bride home. But meanwhile Jonathan lay in ambush near the path by which they were advancing, and when he had fairly caught them, he called up his men, and set on the procession so fiercely that "many fell down dead, and the rest fled into the mountain, and Jonathan took all their spoils." "Thus was the marriage turned into mourning, and the noise of their melody into lamentation."[1] The merry laughter, the clattering, humming timbrels, the marriage songs, the bridegroom and his well-horsed companions, full of life, and proud of themselves and of the bride, as they pace along under a sky unspecked by cloud; the coy delight of the bride and her maids that the hour and the man have at last arrived, and then, Fate, in the shape of Jonathan and his band, springing with wild cries from behind every rock, and death around instead of the hope that had danced before them—what a strange and tragic story!

The country between Tekoa, El-Fureidis, and Mar Saba, which is six or eight miles off to the north-east, towards the Dead Sea, is sacred to different encampments of Arabs, who pitch their tents as the wants of their flocks require. There are several of these encampments in the district, each with clearly-defined limits of territory, and all much alike. Twenty to thirty long black tents, open in front and sloping downwards at the back, are set up close together, each containing two apartments; the one for the women and children, the other for the men. When you approach you find yourself announced by the loud voices of the hateful dogs, whose barking presently brings out young and old to see the stranger; the children in the most wretched pretence of dress, or without

[1] 1 Macc. ix. 35—41.

any at all. Now and then, a full-armed sheikh on horseback is met, waking a disagreeable feeling as he passes, with his long spear, and his black eyes shining out from his dark face: as wild as Ishmael. North-east from El-Fureidis the country is less bare than to the east or south; sometimes, indeed, even pleasant to the eye. Fields, here and there, run down the slopes, and peasants are ploughing with oxen and asses. Flowers deck the sides of the path; grasshoppers and other insects chirp, leap, and fly about. The grasshopper and locust tribes are among the few bright things one meets, for they are of all colours—scarlet, crimson, bright blue, dark blue, yellow, white, green, and brown, as they well may be if the Rabbis be correct in asserting that there are no fewer than 800 varieties of them. Where the hills permit a wide view, the landscape shows a varied outline, but in this part it is neither precipitous nor wild; the ridges stretching away in soft hues, and the valleys nowhere sinking to great depths. Trees are not to be seen.

The district as a whole between Mar Saba and Urtas is, however, very desolate, the first village seen from a distance being Tekoa, to the south. Three thousand years ago, the valleys and heights may have been more alive with population, but they cannot at any time have been thickly inhabited. Here, as elsewhere in this region, the son of Jesse, strong and brave, led his flocks in his youth. Lions came up to the hills from the "swellings of Jordan,"[1] that is, from the reeds and thickets of its lower course, as, indeed, they did till a few centuries ago; filling the wild gorges of the Kedron with their terrible roar. Perhaps it was among these very hills that there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock, and the lad "went after him, and smote him, and

[1] Jer. xlix. 19; l. 44; xii. 5. "Pride," in R.V.

delivered it out of his mouth;" and when the fierce creature rose against his assailant, he "caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him."[1] Yonder, perhaps, on these bare slopes, David wandered before his sheep and goats, sleeping at night in some cave or under some rock, or even in the open, after gathering thorns and kindling a fire to keep off wild beasts; his drink, water from a cleft in the rocks, or from a small pool left in the torrent-bed; his food, some dried figs and bread, stowed in his scrip, or in the bosom of his tunic, the favourite pocket of the common people even now. Here, it may be, morning and night, as his charge came out of some cave used as a fold, or went into it, he made them pass one by one under his shepherd's staff, counting them, lest even one stray lamb should be wanting; and here, alone with his flock, the silent hills, the shining skies, his own soul, and God, he may often have taken up the harp he had invented, and composed to its notes some of those Psalms which have been the joy of a hundred generations, and are still so unspeakably dear to the heart.[2]

The way to Bethlehem led through Wady Urtas again, and gave another opportunity for seeing the great Pools, from the eastern side. The lowest of the three had no water, the second had some, and the highest had most; the second being about half full. A strong buttressed wall runs across, at the eastern end of each, its strength proportioned to the weight of water it had to resist, that of the lower pool having a slope of about ten feet, as seen at a spot where the earth, elsewhere banked up nearly to the top of the wall, revealed the structure underneath. There must, therefore, at the bottom of this wall have been a thickness of not less than fifteen

[1] 1 Sam. xvii. 34 (R.V.).

[2] Lev. xxvii. 32; Jer. xxxiii. 13; Isa. xxxii. 2; 1 Sam. xvi. 18; Amos vi. 5.

feet of masonry. Exquisitely green patches of wheat and barley were growing in the little valley below; their brightness specially attractive because of the desolation on both sides. It is, indeed, a strange characteristic of Palestine that utter barrenness and rich fertility are almost everywhere seen side by side; the limit of moisture drawing a sharp line between them. I noticed overflow ducts in the top of the pool, and conduits to lead off the water, when there was too much. That on the north side, next the old castle, in which the spring was flowing, was of old red pottery pipe, half an inch thick, lying in a square frame of stonework covered with small flat slabs, some of which, as I have said, were missing.

CHAPTER XIX.

BETHLEHEM.

The road to Bethlehem from the old castle El-Burak ran for a time over the shoulder of a low ascent, unfenced, but ploughed and sown, with no walls to protect the ground on the sides of the track, which followed the line of the old aqueduct to Jerusalem, now no longer to be traced except in a few places. We had left a multitude of Russian pilgrims refreshing themselves on the open ground at the castle and the Pools, and had regaled ourselves with some bread and sour goats'-milk—"leben"—bought by our man from the wife of one of the two or three soldiers in the castle. It was very nice indeed, but I was thankful afterwards, when I went inside the castle gate, that I had not seen the matron who supplied it, or her house, for acquaintance with either would inevitably have prevented my indulging in the luxury. Everyone knows that he must swallow an alarming amount of uncleanness in the course of his life, but there is no advantage in absorbing a double dose, though the traveller in Palestine is in constant danger of doing so.

At times, as we rode on, of course at a walk, for you can very rarely go faster in the Holy Land, because of the state of the roads, men passed on asses or horses, which they rode without compunction through the rising grain. The broad valley, running east and then north, from El-Burak[1] to Bethlehem, soon grew more and more

[1] See p. 377.

attractive, as we neared the town. Olive and fig groves covered the slopes, intermixed with vineyards, each with its watch-tower, reminding one of ancient times.[1] Where the ascent was steep, terraces rose, one over the other, to prevent the soil being washed away by the rains. The path along which we were advancing broadened into a road, with dry stone walls of yellowish-white limestone on each side, while similar walls ran in all directions, above us on the right, and below on the left, netting over the whole basin of the valley. Husbandmen were everywhere busy at spring work. Everything looked fresh and cheerful. The walls were new and well-built; the red soil, cleared of stones,[2] and planted with young orchards, or laid out for vegetables, was pleasant to look upon. Not a foot of ground was lost. For several miles there were no weeds, nor ruins: a very striking experience in Palestine. The industry expended was evident, for not a few vineyards on the higher side of the road, as we came near Bethlehem, seemed like the bottoms of quarries, so covered were they with stones. The secret of this unusual activity and life is easily to be found: the people of the district are Christians.

Passing a road which dipped, on the left, through avenues of olives, and then went across the valley, and up the slopes on the other side to Beit Jala, another Christian village somewhat smaller than Bethlehem, we rode on by mistake over the bare limestone which here forms the track, instead of turning to the right, which would have taken us straight to the town. The Tomb of Rachel, by the roadside, first showed our error, for it stands north of Bethlehem, so we turned and went back by another road which climbed up a steep ascent, with the limestone scarped here and there to widen the track. The hill-side

[1] Isa. v. 2.

[2] Isa. v. 2.

below the houses is terraced into a succession of "hanging gardens," rich with olives and other fruit-trees, great walls running along the ascent to form the level breadths. Down the valley rich groves flourished everywhere, till, as the eye followed them, green fields and ploughed land, in some directions, gradually took their place. Grey rock, however, greatly predominated in the view, so that as a whole the landscape was still very desolate, though this oasis lay in its midst. The purple Moabite hills rose to the east, their tops rising in what seemed a table-land; at their feet lay the deep blue waters of the Dead Sea; then came the great buildings grouped beside the Church of the Nativity—the Latin, Greek, and Armenian convents, which, with the church itself, stretch along the top of the town-ridge, on the south-east; the great buttresses reaching down the sides of the hill with a very imposing effect.

But now we had come to the houses, which were flat-roofed, of yellowish-white limestone; many of two, others of three storeys, and a few of one. Some men were enjoying a quiet gossip on the roof of a low building, which had two large arched windows, with olive-trees before the door. A boy leaned idly over the wall, a little below, looking at the green field on the slope beneath. Then came a man astride a donkey, which already carried a sack thrown across it, half on each side, the man sitting above it, his legs thrust out on a level with the donkey's chest; next, some bare-legged peasants in skull-caps, each, of course, with a long stick in his hand; some townsmen in different costumes, and some Bethlehem women also passed, one way or the other.

The female dress is peculiar in this locality. Maidens wear a light frame on the head, covered with a long white linen or cotton veil, which falls over the shoulders to the elbows; they have earrings, and, over the front of the

head, showing some of the hair below it, and just under the veil, is a diadem of silver, or silver-gilt, with a band of ornaments of the same material, loosely fastened to it at both ends, so as to rest on the brow immediately under the hair, leaving the forehead only partly visible. Their black hair hangs on their shoulders in heavy plaits, just seen beneath the veil, which always leaves the face exposed —for are they not Christians? Their chief, or indeed, it may be, only garment, is a long blue or striped gown, generally of cotton, loosely tied in at the waist, with open sleeves hanging down to the knees, like those of a surplice; its front, above the waist, always set off, more or less, with red, yellow, or green patches of cloth, embroidered to the wearer's taste. Over this gown, however, the well-to-do are fond of wearing a bright red short-sleeved jacket, reaching, in some cases, to the waist; in others, to the knees.

Matrons have a somewhat different head-dress, the veil resting on the top of a round, brimless felt hat, much like that of a Greek priest, its front ornamented, in most cases, with coins. All wear earrings, and strings of coins glitter round their necks, hanging, at times, down to the breast. The veil is about two yards long, and not quite a yard wide—large and stout enough to hold anything the owner may think fit to carry in it, when she turns it, for the time, to some prosaic use, as when Ruth held out her veil to Boaz while he filled it with six measures of barley and then laid it on her back or head. And very gladly, no doubt, she set out with it, up the steep hill-track, to Naomi's, to show her good fortune.[1] Veils are still used thus by the women of Bethlehem, though the ends are gaudy enough with coloured silk to keep it, when new, from such humble service. The whole

[1] Ruth iii. 15.

fortune of maiden or matron alike is often sewn on her head-dress, or hung round her neck, and not a few women have been murdered in past days for the sake of the wealth thus changed, in the strictest sense, into vanity. The men, though Christian, generally wear the turban, not a few, however, having only the red Turkish fez; a striped, wide-sleeved dressing-gown, of bright-coloured cotton, being thrown over the white or coloured under-shirt.

The town is picturesque in the highest degree. Its fortified walls have long vanished, but its position on a long, narrow ridge, has confined it to the limits of three thousand years ago, and its houses, very probably, are just the same in appearance as those of the time of David, or even earlier. In fact, we have before us an old Jewish city such as men inhabited in the Bible ages. But its picturesqueness is the best of it, for the streets are as far from being clean as those of other Eastern towns. Rivulets of abomination run across them or stand in puddles, for scavengers are unknown, and the masterless, homeless dogs cannot eat all the garbage. The main street is largely occupied by workshops, or rather arches, with no window, which is not much loss in such a climate. Looking in, one sees that the floor is covered with men sitting cross-legged, hard at work making carved rosaries from the stones of the Dom palm, or the common date, or olive-wood; crosses from fig-wood, stained black; fancy trifles from the asphalt of the Dead Sea; endless souvenirs of the town in olive-wood; but, above all, cutting medallions from the mother-of-pearl oyster-shells of the Red Sea, or engraving them with the story of our Lord from His birth to His death. In this one art alone there are, perhaps, 500 workmen engaged. The staple industry of the town is in fact the manufacture of endlessly varied

mementos of Bethlehem, to be sold, after they have been blessed by the priests, to the pilgrims. This being a Christian town, the wives and daughters often sit with their husbands or brothers: a strange sight in the East, but one that goes far, by what it suggests, to account for the general prosperity.

The buildings show that no masons could be better than the Bethlehemites, though there are not many good houses except in the front street, and even this has its better and its worse end. Inside, some are, of course, very superior to others, and it is the same with the workshops. Here is one, where men and women are busy making beads for rosaries. All the men are on the ground, cross-legged; the women sit on low pieces of wood, their bare feet visible outside their dress. Mat baskets, or large wooden bowls, of beads cut from olive rods, are on the ground; one man saws a small piece of wood fixed upright in a vice, another turns the beads at a most primitive lathe, driven by a cord stretched on a bent fiddle-stick arrangement. The work-bench consists of some beams on the ground, but one man has a vice fixed in the earth, and is filing something vigorously; the women have fiddle-bows of their own, but the string is a fine saw to cut the beads apart. The long stick which they dissect with this tool rests on an upright, and is held straight by the left hand.

The workshop of Joseph at Nazareth could not have been simpler, or, I might say, ruder, for this one seems originally to have been a small cavern in the hill-side, the front being filled in, except the door, with masonry, to fit it for its present purpose. The roof is ceiled with a coating of reed-stalks, which sadly needs repair; the walls are in their natural roughness; the floor is the limestone; the door might have been made by one of Noah's carpenters,

so roughly is it put together. A woman outside, with a nearly naked child astride her shoulder, her forehead and neck bright with coins, is looking in, with ourselves, at the busy scene. Turning up one of the short steep side-lanes, I found a second street parallel with the principal one, but dirtier. Careful stepping over pools and rivulets which were not from the heavens, was needed to reach the Protestant School, which I wished to visit. Inside, I need not say, English taste and cleanliness formed a wonderful contrast to the dismal approach. At some points, on the lower side of the main street, houses extend a short way down the hill, with stairs outside. One I noticed with the stone wall built on the edge of the lime-stone, so that the view was uninterrupted to the bottom of the valley. A very rickety hand-rail guarded the inner side; such a rail as the whole West could not match; made of natural wood, rough, bent, gaping, set on the steps, and held in its place one knew not how. Two flights led up to the door, over which was a sacred picture, the inmates belonging to the Greek Church. Stairs and house alike were built in arches; the wooden railing alone vindicating the rude backwardness of the East. Two women sat grinding corn on the landing above the first flight; a young woman and a young man were enjoying an interview lower down, and a miserable-looking old woman surveyed the world from above.

Going towards the Church of the Nativity, the scene became livelier. Sellers of vegetables sat on the ground along the walls, their stores at their side, or in front of them; beggars, in long blue gaberdines, silently stretched out their hands for alms; women with their white side veils and bright dresses passed and re-passed; open-air grocers displayed their wares; one turbaned figure sat amidst a show of broken and mended umbrellas; another

watched over a collection of mouse-traps, which he very much wished to convert into piastres; a third fondly hoped you would invest in his figs, raisins, or oranges; a fourth had bread or cakes to tempt you. A few shops, faintly trying to look European, presented in the windows a varied collection of local mementos; and, of course, there were one or two places where thirsty souls might drink, though foreigners alone, I doubt not, sought any stronger beverage than coffee.

The entrance to the Church of the Nativity faces an open space; the promenade of older Bethlehemites, and the playground of younger. Old marble pillars lie side by side in one part of it, and serve as a seat for the weary or idle, and a centre of activity for urchins, who must clamber over something, even in the city of David. The old arched gateway into the church has been long ago filled up with heavy square stones, to resist attack, and now the only entrance is by a small door, less than three feet broad, and hardly four feet high;[1] but it is well that the proudest have to stoop in entering a building so venerable. Contemporary evidence proves that it was built by order of Constantine,[2] so that it is the oldest church in Palestine, perhaps in the world. Within, you are in the presence of sixteen centuries, and tread ground hallowed by the footsteps of nearly fifty generations of believers in the Crucified One. You find yourself in a small bare porch, once approached through a spacious quadrangle on the open space outside, with covered ways, lined with rows of pillars, in front and at the sides, and provision for baptism and oblation in the centre. From this, three spacious arched gates led into the ancient porch, which ran along great part of the west end of the church; but two of the gates have been entirely built up, and, as we

[1] It is thirty-two inches by forty-six. [2] A.D. 306—337.

have seen, only a very small doorway is left in the third, for fear of the Mahommedans. The porch is dark, and is divided by walls into different chambers.

Inside, the venerable simplicity is very impressive. You face the east end, which is 170 feet from the western wall, and, proceeding to the centre, find yourself under a nave which rises in a pointed roof about thirty feet over the capitals of the great pillars, nineteen feet high, which support an aisle on each side. A clere-story, with five arched windows at each side, admits abundant light. The aisles are flat-roofed, supported in the centre by a row of eleven massive pillars, while another row of the same number holds up the straight beams of the lofty nave, the windows over which correspond to the spaces between the columns below. Once elaborately painted, there is now little ornament left on them, except some faint indications of former pictures of saints, and armorial bearings and mottoes, left eight hundred years ago by the Crusaders, with whose greatest chiefs it was a great matter to have their names emblazoned in the Church of the Nativity. The columns, each one mighty whole, are of reddish limestone with white veins, and rest on great square slabs, the capitals being Corinthian, and the architraves very simple. The pointed roof of the nave was once richly painted and gilded, but this glory has long ago departed; and the spaces between the high windows at its sides were formerly covered with marbles and mosaics, but though the marbles remain, the mosaics sur-vive only in fragments. When perfect, these represented, on the south side, the seven immediate ancestors of Joseph, the husband of the Holy Virgin. Above them, concealed by curtains, are niches containing altars, on which books of the Gospels rest; and on a line with these is a strange mosaic of coloured glass, on a gilded ground, representing

a huge plant, the creation of someone's brain, long ago, not the imitation of any natural growth. On the left wall of this aisle, high up, there once were mosaics of ancient churches, but only those of Antioch and Sardis now remain, in very primitive drawing, without perspective. The mosaics were put up by Manuel Comnenus, Emperor of Constantinople, about A.D. 1160; but the great pillars and the structure as a whole, with its crosses and Corinthian capitals, admittedly date from the time of Constantine. The beams of the lofty roof of the nave are of plain unpainted cypress, and are not in any way concealed.

A short way down the aisle stands the ancient baptismal font, eight-sided, with an inscription in Greek on a tablet below, over a small sculptured cross, "(Given) as a memorial, before God, and for the peace and forgiveness of the sinners (who presented it), of whom the Lord knows the names." Humble enough! But all the more likely to be noted above. It brings one in mind of the dying request of the once imperious Alfonso de Ojeda, erewhile the haughtiest knight of Castile, yet in the end lowly before his Saviour—that they should bury him at the entrance to the cathedral at Havana, that everyone, as he went in, might tread on the dust of so unworthy a worm. This inscription, and the rude scratchings of their crests on the pillars by old Crusading warriors, gone over to the majority eight hundred years ago, touched me greatly. There are two crowns among them, with the crest rising high above, and the cheek-plates of the helmet below; and four crests and helmets of knights, with legends, now beyond my reading, to tell who it was that each was intended to immortalise. But the wearers have all, long since, gone on a longer journey than that which brought them here.

A wall on the east side of this many-pillared square space runs across aisles and nave alike; the former ending here, though the nave really extends beyond this line to the east end of the church, which is rounded into a projecting half-circle, or apse: the secret chamber of the Greek altar and choir, for in Greek worship both are hidden from the congregation by a screen. This apsidal end, with two similar semicircles at the two ends of the transept, gives the shape of a Latin cross to the whole building. The ends show some remains of very old mosaics, which merit close study as illustrations of ancient Christian ideas. In that at the south side, Christ is entering into Jerusalem, riding on an ass, and accompanied by a disciple, the other figures of His escort being destroyed. People who have come out from the city to meet Him spread their garments in the way; one man is climbing a tree, to cut off branches with which to do Him honour, and a woman, with a child sitting on her left shoulder,[1] looks on. At the north side, St. Thomas is being invited by our Saviour to examine His wounds, but here, and also in the fragment of another mosaic, he and his fellow-apostles are represented without a nimbus, or ring of glory, round the head. In one part, the Virgin Mary is sitting between two angels.

But these ancient glories are apt to be overlooked in the blaze of comparatively modern splendour with which the Greeks have filled this sacred spot. The pillars, with rich Corinthian capitals, are ornamented with large pictures of saints. Six low steps lead to a raised floor, before the east end of the nave, which is hidden by an elaborate screen about twenty-three feet high, with a decorated cross, some sacred pictures, and small carved angels with wings, rising above it; while there is another row of

[1] Isa. xlix. 22.

pictures immediately under the cornice. Behind this screen the Elements are consecrated, and the choir sing. The recess between the pillars of the transept and this gorgeous partition is shut off, at each side, by a screen beautifully panelled, about eight feet high, surmounted, on the left side, by a row of hanging lamps, of which there are altogether fourteen on the two sides facing the nave and the transept. Two huge candlesticks, with a candle in each, rising about twelve feet high, and a row of smaller ones on the edge of the socket, stand before the high screen; and a string of lamps, looped up in the centre into two graceful curves, hang across from the capitals of the corner pillars.

Worshippers are always coming and going; nearly all the men in turbans and striped "abbas;" some resting on the stone steps; others sitting on the floor; yet others praying with their faces to the east, before the great screen. Christ has followers of many nations, and, I feel sure, not a few faithful ones among the ebbing and flowing congregation who lift up their hearts to Him, day by day, in this specially sacred temple. We are apt to regard foreign Churches harshly; to know them better, would lead us to respect them more. At Athens, at Odessa, and at St. Petersburg, the result of inquiries from those likely to be best informed—Bible Society agents, and the head of a great Protestant Missionary School—was to fill my heart with joy, for I learnt that, alike in Greece and in vast Russia, not a few true Christians are everywhere found in the ancient communion.

Descending the steps from the raised floor of the eastern part of the nave, and turning sharply to the left, a half-sunk arched doorway leads you down by thirteen steps to the Chapel of the Nativity; once a rude cave; now paved and walled with marble, and lighted by thirty-two

lamps. About forty feet from east to west, it is only sixteen wide, and ten high, and, of course, would be totally dark but for the artificial illumination, for it lies immediately under the great choir, at the very east of the church. The roof is covered with what had once been striped cloth of gold; three huge candlesticks, with candles rising higher than your head, stand at the back; and in front, between two marble pillars, a large picture of the Nativity, and some small ones below it, rest on a projecting shelf of marble, forming the altar.

Below this is a shrine unspeakably sacred to millions of our fellow Christians. It is semicircular, arching outwards above, and at most only four feet high. Fifteen silver lamps burn in it, night and day, lighting up the painted marbles which encrust it; and in the centre of its small floor is a silver star—marking the spot, it is believed, over which the Star of the East once rested—with an inscription, at the sight of which, I frankly confess, I wept like a child: "*Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus natus est*" ("Here Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary"). A Turkish soldier, gun in hand, and fez on head, stood a few steps behind, but I forgot his presence. Pilgrims kneeled down and kissed the silver which spoke a story so infinitely touching, and I did the same, for I do not believe in indiscriminate scepticism.

As far back as the middle of the second century—that is to say, within less than 120 years of our Lord's death, and within thirty or forty years after that of the last of the apostles, the beloved St. John—Justin Martyr, himself a man of Nablus, speaks of the Saviour's birth as having taken place "in a certain cave very close to the village;" and this particular cave, now honoured as the scene of the Saviour's birth, was already

so venerated in the days of Hadrian[1] that, to desecrate it, he caused a grove sacred to Adonis to be planted over it, so that the Syrian god might be worshipped on the very spot—a form of idolatry peculiarly abhorrent to the pure morals of Christianity. Origen, in the opening of the third century, speaks of this cave as recognised even by the heathen as the birth-place of their Lord.[2] And to this spot came St. Jerome,[3] making his home for thirty years in a cave close by, that he might be near the birth-place of his Master; Hadrian's grove had been destroyed sixteen years before his birth, to make room for the very church now standing. There is no reason, therefore, so far as I can see, to doubt that in this cave, so hallowed by immemorial veneration, the Great Event associated with it actually took place.

Nor is there any ground for hesitation because it is a cave that is regarded as the sacred spot. Nothing is more common in a Palestine village, built on a hill, than to use as adjuncts of the houses, the caves with which all the limestone rocks of the country abound; making them the store-room, perhaps, or the workshop, or the stable, and building the dwellings before them so as to join the two. Canon Tristram[4] speaks of a farm-house he visited, north of Acre, which was a granary and stable below and a dwelling-place above; and many stables in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem are still recesses cut in the rock, or mere natural caves.[5] In Egypt I have often seen houses where goats, sheep, cattle, or an ass, were in one part, and the human beings in the other. Had the piety of the monks left the alleged site of the Nativity in its original state, there would have been no presumption against it from its being a cave.

[1] A.D. 117—138. [2] A.D. 185—253. [3] A.D. 331—420.
[4] *Land of Israel*, p. 72. [5] *Tent Work in Palestine*, p. 145.

As might have been expected, centuries have brought many doubtful accretions to the original simple story. Passing from the Cave of the Nativity, you are led, still underground, past what the Latin Church says is the very manger, to an altar on the spot where, it is alleged, the Magi worshipped the Infant Saviour; then to a spring from which the Holy Family was supplied; next to the place where the vision appeared commanding the flight into Egypt; then to the chapel where the Innocents were buried; and finally to the tombs of Eustochium and Paula, the pupils of St. Jerome, and of the great father himself, and to the cave in which he lived so long, preparing his immortal Vulgate Bible; the only light of this gloomy retreat being the opening into the passage of the Latin monastery. That he lived and was buried here, and that Paula was buried near him, is very probable; as to the rest, fiction seems to have run wild.

Joined to the famous church, are the three monasteries of the Greeks, Armenians, and Latins, which have fine orchards, rooms to receive travellers, and charming views from their roofs. In that of the Latins were some fat swine, the only ones I saw in Palestine. In that of the Greeks there is a monkish wonder which at least shows the strength of human credulity. A cave is shown, on the floor of which a drop of the Holy Virgin's milk is said to have fallen, with the result, as is universally believed, of making the pulverised rock highly efficacious for increasing the milk of women and even of animals, for which purpose round cakes, mixed with dust from it, are to this day sold to pilgrims!

Only the portion of the church from the transept eastward is now used for worship, and I must say that the air and behaviour of the local clergy and laity, as they walk about in the aisles and nave of the other half, make it

hard to realise the sanctity of the place. Sellers obtrude their wares on the visitor, inviting attention to their trays of local keepsakes and "curios," or producing them from their dress; often disturbing the sacred house by noisy haggling and chaffering, till one feels something of the righteous indignation that roused our Lord to drive their predecessors in this sacrilege from the Temple courts.[1]

The south side of Bethlehem looks down as deep a valley as that on the north, with similar terraces, rich in fruit-trees, sinking in great steps to the hollow below, which is crowded with gardens and orchards. All round Bethlehem, indeed, the eye wanders over scenes beautiful in their natural charms, or hallowed by sacred memories. Directly to the north lies the tomb of Rachel, whom Jacob buried by the wayside, as he tells his sons on his death-bed many long years after:[2] his heart true, even in death, to her whom he had loved at first sight in distant Mesopotamia, and had so early lost but could never forget. The town was called Ephrath then, for the name Bethlehem ("the House of Bread")—now corrupted by the Arabs into Beit-Lahm ("the House of Flesh")—was given to it centuries later. On the slopes down the valley to the east, the beautiful idyl of Ruth had its scene. The fields in which she gleaned are there, of course; and the path by which she and Naomi, two lonely widows, climbed up to the town is still, no doubt, the same as that by which the daughters of Bethlehem come up to the village from the glen. In that Wady Kharubeh, and on the hill-side beyond, lay the fields of Boaz, where he allowed the Moabitess to glean after the reapers, as you may still see girls and women doing in harvest-time. The old man was smitten by the young widow before he knew it, for as soon as he saw her, he must needs beg her not to glean in any

[1] Mark xi. 15—18. [2] Gen xlviii. 7.

other part of the valley but his, and to stay fast by his maidens.[1] Women, it seems, shared the toil of harvesting in those early days, as they do now, no less than the "young men," who, to their shame, needed the warning of Boaz not to touch the poor gleaner. Reapers, even now, come from all parts of the country to work for hire, and are not too much to be trusted in either morals or manners. Harvest is earlier on the sea-coast and plains, and in the Jordan valley, than on the hills, and hence the hill-men are free to go down to help in it without neglecting their own grain, and the lowlanders can come up to the hills because their harvest is over.

The land belonging to Boaz was not fenced off, for there are neither hedges nor fences in Palestine, except round orchards or gardens; but it was marked off by boundary stones, sacredly respected by every one. To remove a neighbour's landmarks was to incur the curse of God; and Job could not picture the unscrupulously wicked more vividly than by charging them with this crime.[2] You see these stones in every part of Palestine; generally a rough block, partly sunk in the ground. On the hills beyond there were none, for no one owned any part of these in private right; they were the "commons," on which each had an equal right to pasture his flock or herd. Harvest in every country is a joyful time, and the heart of Boaz was in keeping with the good nature of all around. As now, the whole village, one may suppose, had gone out to the fields; the children and aged gleaning; the strong, of both sexes, plying the sickle. It is quite likely, too, that some of the workers from the lowlands, or the Jordan valley, had brought their wives and families with them, that the

[1] Ruth ii. 8.

[2] Deut. xix. 14; xxvii. 17; Prov. xxii. 28; xxiii. 10; Job xxiv. 2.

women and children might get a share of the gleaning, for they do this still, sleeping on the ground at night, under the bright sky. The whole business, indeed, is taken easily, for good weather is certain, and there is so little reason for hurry that you may at times see a whole line of reapers sitting at their task, and moving forward to the grain without a thought of rising. Rain in harvest is, in fact, such an unusual occurrence that it will be remembered how, on its falling at the call of Samuel, it was recognised by the people as a miraculous sign.[1]

Boaz saluted the reapers, when he came among them, with the courteous phrase, "The Lord be with you," and received the response, "The Lord bless thee." The owner meets his labourers to-day with the very same words, and the same answer is returned. The evening meal is still the same as that which Ruth was invited to share. A fire of dry grass or stalks of weeds, or stubble or straw, is kindled, and a lapful of ears tossed on it and left till the husks are scorched off. On this sign that they are ready for eating, the whole are cleverly swept from the embers into a cloak spread out to receive them. The grain is then beaten out and winnowed, by being thrown up into the air, and after this is spread out for the hungry mouths around. Sometimes it is roasted in a pan or on an iron plate, or a bunch of wheat is held over the fire till the chaff is burnt off; some liking this method better than throwing the ears on the fire. Women have this task, and it is amusing to see them holding the corn in the flame till the precise moment when the husks are consumed, and then beating out the grain with skilled dexterity, with the help of a short stick. Such "parched corn"[2] is so pleasant to the taste that one cannot wonder at its having kept its ground, as the reaper's food, for over three

[1] 1 Sam. xii. 17, 18. [2] Ruth ii. 14.

thousand years. As in those early days, vinegar is still often mixed with water, to make a cooling drink in the warm summer, so that in this, also, modern and ancient customs agree. One can easily, moreover, see the need of Boaz guarding Ruth from the broad and noisy humour so natural in such company after the labour of the day was over. No picture could be more beautiful in its simplicity than that of Ruth sitting beside the reapers, Boaz taking his place among them, near her, and reaching her some of the parched corn, of which he was partaking with his men.[1]

Ruth began her gleaning when the barley ripened, and followed Naomi's sagacious advice, to keep to the field of Boaz till the wheat was reaped; the one crop being often cut before the other is ripe.[2] Hence, the gift of Boaz was six measures of barley—not wheat, for though barley is eaten only by the poor, the wheat was not yet ready, and barley bread is excellent when better cannot be had. Nor are we to suppose that she carried home all the straw of her gleaning, for we are told that "she beat out what she had gleaned,"[3] just as the women do now, after the day's gleaning is over; sitting down by the roadside and beating out the grain with a stone or stick into her stout linen veil, and throwing away the straw; then climbing the hill with her ephah of barley[4]—four gallons, says Josephus; eight, say the Rabbis—safely tied up, and poised on her head. The law gave the right of gleaning to the poor, for whom, in Israel, there was no more formal provision; and this custom has become so deeply rooted that one sees, at the present day, well-nigh as many gleaners as reapers, when a valley is being harvested. That Ruth and Naomi should have taken advantage of this kindly system shows that they must have been poor. But this

[1] Ruth ii. 14.
[2] Ruth ii. 22, 23.
[3] Ruth ii. 17.
[4] Ruth ii. 17.

was no bar to Ruth's marriage with Boaz, though he was rich; for society in the East is not divided by difference of culture, as it is with us; the poorest bear themselves with a natural self-respect which brings them closer to the rich than is the case with the same class in the West. The humblest man in a village comes in at the open door of a rich man's house, to enjoy the spectacle of a merry-making, without a thought of impropriety on either side. And there is no distinction of caste in Eastern worship. The merchant, the herdsman, the slave, and the beggar, kneel promiscuously on the floor of the mosque, or join hands in the ring formed round a saint's tomb, at a "zikr;"[1] and a man in the very meanest garment walks into the presence of a governor to speak with him, without the slightest constraint on the one side or feeling of intrusion on the other.

Besides inviting Ruth to a share of the "parched corn" and the "vinegar," Boaz also told her that she was free to drink from the water-jars, or water-skins, when she felt thirsty,[2] just as a modern farmer might show a similar courtesy to a modern gleaner, water being a necessary in the field, in such a climate. Indeed, we see in the tomb-paintings of Egypt a similar provision of water in skins and jars, from which reapers and gleaners alike quench their thirst. But it seems as if the refreshments of the field were not confined to water, vinegar, and parched corn, for we read that Boaz "had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry," before he went to lie down at the end of the mound of threshed grain;[3] and in the story of the churlish Nabal we have an instance of a harvest-feast on a very liberal scale; while Abigail carried to David, as his share of the bounties dispensed at the harvest-home, not only parched

[1] See *ante*, p. 177. [2] Ruth ii. 9. [3] Ruth iii. 7.

corn, but loaves of bread, skins of wine, roasted sheep, clusters of raisins, and cakes of figs.[1] It is not, indeed, to be supposed that this was the everyday fare of either reapers or master, for the habits of the East are very simple; but it marked, at any rate, the finishing of the year's work. Homer's description of the harvest-field closes the labours of the day with a substantial repast:—

"A field
Crowded with corn, in which the reapers toiled,
Each with a sharp-tooth'd sickle in his hand.
Along the furrow here, the harvest fell
In frequent handfuls; there, they bound the sheaves.
Three binders of the sheaves their sultry task
All plied industrious, and, behind them, boys
Attended, filling with the corn their arms,
And offering still their bundles to be bound.
Amid them, staff in hand, the master stood
Silent exulting, while, beneath an oak
Apart, his heralds busily prepared
The banquet, dressing a well-thriven ox,
New slain, and the attendant maidens mixed
Large supper for the hinds, of whitest flour."[2]

Yet the parched corn and vinegar would be the usual fare, as it is now; a feast like that of Nabal's men, or the one depicted by Homer, would be the great event when all was over. I certainly never heard of such a thing, and the manners of the East do not change.

Ruth's mode of calling the attention of Boaz to her claims on him as her next-of-kin, or "goel," bound to "redeem" her from the calamity of widowhood by honourable marriage, seems strange to us, but is quite in keeping with the everyday life of Eastern countries. Boaz himself praises her for it, finding a proof of special worth in her having sought him, an old man,

[1] 1 Sam. xxv. 18—36.

[2] *Iliad*, bk. xviii. (Cowper).

for a husband, instead of "following young men, whether rich or poor."[1] Naomi, however, had made a mistake in sending her to Boaz, as there was a still nearer kinsman; so that Boaz, however love-sick, could not marry her till the other had refused to do so.

Orientals cover their head and their feet when they go to sleep, but both sexes lie down in the clothes worn through the day, so that they can easily rest in the warm months wherever night overtakes them, without any preparation. Nor was there anything in Ruth's action to shock conventional propriety, for she followed the advice of the pure and godly Naomi, and was commended by Boaz himself as a woman known by all the town for her virtuous character.[2]

The refusal of a next-of-kin to do his duty, by marrying the widow of his brother or other relative, was the occasion of a curious custom in ancient Israel. "If the man likes not to take his brother's [or kinsman's] widow," says Deuteronomy, "then let the widow go up to the gate [of the town or village, where all public business is transacted] unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother or [kinsman] refuseth to raise up to his brother a name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother [or kinsman]. Then the elders of the city shall call him and speak unto him, and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; then shall his brother's widow come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed."[3] In Ruth's case, however, it would seem that the refractory kinsman drew off his own shoe, and handed it to Boaz as

[1] Ruth iii. 10. [2] Ruth iii. 11. [3] Deut. xxv. 7—10.

a sign of the transference of his rights over Ruth.[1] May we see an explanation of this, though a very prosaic one, in a custom which is still observed by the Jews of Barbary in a marriage? "When the bride enters the room where the bridegroom awaits her, as she crosses the threshold, he stoops down, and, slipping off his shoe, strikes her with the heel of it on the nape of the neck,"[2] as a sign and public acknowledgment that she is his wife; a husband only having the right he has thus exercised. So the ungracious kinsman, in handing over his shoe to Boaz, gave up to him his matrimonial rights, of which the use of the slipper in a summary way, should discipline require it, was the acknowledged symbol. I have no doubt that Boaz, a respectable, formal, elderly man, was careful to assert his supremacy and the obedience due by Ruth in the usual way; but we may be very sure that the tap on her shoulders on the marriage-day was the first and last occasion of his needing to use this mild substitute for the modern hob-nailed boot.

The marriage thus strangely brought about, and as strangely celebrated by the transference of the masterful sandal, was, as all know, most happy in its results. It gave Ruth, as her husband, the representative of one of the oldest families of Bethlehem, for Boaz was descended from the greatest house of Judah, that of Pharez:[3] a line which, from David's time, was famous for the illustrious warriors it gave the State,[4] the royal house itself being its head; a line, too, which became so numerous that 468 sons of "Perez" came back with Zerubbabel from Babylon, Zerubbabel himself being one of the stock.[5] Ibzan,

[1] Ruth iv. 8. [2] *Pillars of Hercules*, i. 305.
[3] Or "Perez" (Gen. xxxviii. 29; Ruth iv. 12; Matt. i. 3).
[4] 1 Chron. xxvii. 2, 3; xi. 11; 2 Sam. xxiii. 8.
[5] 1 Chron. ix. 4; Neh. xi. 4—6; 1 Esdr. v. 5.

the Bethlehemite, who judged Israel for seven years after Jephthah,[1] and who had thirty sons and thirty daughters, is asserted in the Talmud to have been no other than Boaz himself: a point difficult to settle. But it is through his grandson Jesse that the husband of Ruth is most illustrious, for the youngest of Jesse's sons, as every one knows, was no other than David. Tradition reports that Jesse spent his days in Bethlehem, a weaver of veils for the Temple, though, so far as we know, his wealth consisted mainly in some sheep and goats which David tended.[2] But he must have been a village dignitary as well as a worthy man, to have his name so persistently given in connection with his greatest son, who is constantly mentioned as "the son of Jesse," while the Saviour Himself is proclaimed as a "shoot out of the stock of Jesse," and "the root of Jesse which should stand as an ensign to the people."[3] Jesse must have owned land in Bethlehem, perhaps the fields of his grandfather Boaz, for David gave away ground near the village;[4] and, indeed, if Jesse had not been the leading man of the place, he could hardly have presided with the village elders at the sacrificial feast of the community, held on the first new moon of each year, as we find him doing when the Prophet Samuel came to anoint his shepherd-son.[5]

There are not many incidents connecting David with Bethlehem, though he lived in it till after his victory over Goliath.[6] We learn, however, that even while in the court of Saul, he continued to visit the place at the yearly sacrificial feast of the family.[7] Just before you reach the town, on the flat sheet of rock on which our tents were pitched,

[1] Judg. xii. 8—10.
[2] 1 Sam. xvi. 11; xvii. 34, 35.
[3] Isa. xi. 1, 10.
[4] 2 Sam. xix. 37, 38; Jer. xli. 17.
[5] 1 Sam. xvi. 3—5.
[6] 1 Sam. xvii. 12, ff.
[7] 1 Sam. xx. 6.

were three round wells,[1] or rather well-shafts, to the largest of which the name of David's Well is given, though on what authority it is hard to tell. The largest of the three openings proved to be twenty-six feet deep, but it is partly filled with stones, so that the original depth cannot be known. Between two and three feet of water stood at the bottom; but the other openings, which were about twelve feet deep, were dry. The water in the first pit was fresh and good, like that of a spring, and it is likely that it flows from one, though most of the water seems to find some escape through the rocks. In David's time it may have risen much higher in the shaft. Situated at the only spot where "a gate" could have been built—the north end of the town, which alone joins the country without an intervening valley—this well seems fairly entitled to be regarded as that from which the precious draught was brought to the shepherd-king. It is, by the way, the only spring in Bethlehem, the town depending entirely on cisterns.

As the shafts are entirely unprotected, they were a terror to me in the night, notwithstanding their venerable associations; for a sudden disappearance into one of them would have left little hope of escape. There is another well, however, which the monks honour with the name of David, about three-quarters of a mile north-east of Bethlehem, beyond the valley beneath the town; but it is much more probable that the one at my tent-side was that from which he longed for a draught of water: a gratification obtained for him at the risk of their lives by three mighty men of his band.[2] Somewhere, also, in Bethlehem, in his father's sepulchre, lies the stripling Asahel, David's cousin, so swift of foot, and who was slain by Abner in self-defence.[3]

[1] It is said that there are five shafts, but I saw only three.

[2] 2 Sam. xxiii. 14; 1 Chron. xi. 17. [3] 2 Sam. ii. 32.

In times far earlier, the village had been the home of Jonathan, the son or descendant of Gershom the son of Moses, and whose name has been changed by the rabbis into Manasseh, to screen the memory of the great law-giver from the stain of having so unworthy an apostate among his near posterity. For it was this Jonathan who wandered to the north, and, after serving as priest in the idol-house of Micah the Ephraimite, became priest of the graven image at Dan: an office which continued in his family till the Captivity.[1] Yet the greatest honour of Bethlehem, unique in the history of the world, and, indeed, of the universe, was that foretold by Micah:—"But thou, Bethlehem-Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."[2] For in this small village was born the Saviour of the world.

Looking along the sweeping valley to the south-east, beyond the fields to which Ruth "went down," the eye rests on softly-rising hills, to the south of which she could see those of Moab, so sadly dear to her, rising purple beyond the Dead Sea. The slopes of the hills close at hand are those, as tradition maintains, on which the shepherds were watching by night, when the angel and the heavenly choir appeared, to announce the birth of Him who was "Christ, the Lord." The grey, barren wilderness of Judæa creeps up to them, but they are, themselves, comparatively green. A clump of olive-trees surrounds a ruin fancifully supposed to be that of the shepherds' tower. The wall still seen is of good-sized stones, left there because building material is abundant in the neighbourhood. Old gnarled olives, their trunks

[1] Judg. xviii. 30. [2] Micah v. 2.

riven, twisted, pierced by age, and disproportionately large for their crown of silver-green leaves, give a touch of beauty to the baldness of the landscape, and afford shade to the peasant while tending the long-eared, broad-tailed sheep, and lively black goats, that browse among them. Bare-legged, bare-armed, with huge slippers, it may be, and a white or coloured kerchief, old and faded, round his close-fitting skull-cap; over his blue shirt, which reaches to his calves, a striped abba, rude enough in its tailoring, rather a square bag than a coat, a leather belt keeping it tight round him,—he sits there in the spring time, among the red anemones, tulips, and poppies, the short-lived glories of the pastures of Palestine, and looks the picture of vacuity, his staff on the ground beside him, and his club tied to his girdle. Born of hereditary ignorance, his intelligence is little superior to that of the sheep he watches.

Bethlehem stands 100 feet higher than Jerusalem, being 2,550 feet above the sea at its highest point. But the neighbouring hills are lower than those round the Holy City, and there is more cultivation; Bethlehem looks slightly down on its surrounding heights, while Jerusalem is commanded by its girdle of hills. The population of David's city consists of Latin, Greek, and Armenian Christians, through the influence of the triple, fortress-like convent round the ancient church, but they are on good terms with each other, and even intermarry, which these rival sects seldom do in Jerusalem. The Roman Catholics have splendid school-buildings, much larger and finer than any others, and I have no doubt they do much good.

I did not see any tattooing among the women, and, indeed, throughout Palestine there is little of it, compared with the fashion in Egypt, where the features

and arms are often quite disfigured. The peasant-women of the Holy Land, with better taste, confine themselves to a mark on the palms of their hands, between the eyes, and on the chin, with a row of small points along the lower lip, producing an effect something like that of the patches worn last century by English ladies. But the women of Bethlehem are superior to these rude follies. Thanks, perhaps, to the blood of the Crusaders, of a share of which they boast, they are altogether finer than any women I saw elsewhere in Palestine, with the exception, perhaps, of those of Nazareth. The population is said to be about 4,000.

Though the town was walled in the time of Boaz, when the elders "sat in the gate," and when Rehoboam fortified it,[1] there are no walls now. The flat roofs join each other in many cases, and thus afford an easy passage from one house to another, which is often used. This explains our Lord's counsel to His disciples[2] not to think, when troubles burst on the land, of coming down to take anything out of the house, if they chanced to be on the housetop at the moment the news reached them. They were rather to flee along the roofs, and thus escape. The local tradesmen sometimes press one to come into their dwellings to inspect their wares, and an opportunity is thus given of seeing the inside of a Bethlehem establishment. The room is of arched stone, without furniture, except the inevitable divan, or broad seat along the wall; and the women have no timidity at your entrance. Squatted on the floor, one, it may be, is busy sewing while she watches her baby in the cradle, another is preparing to bake, and a third will bring you a water-pipe and a glass of water, while you look over the crucifixes,

[1] Ruth iv. 1; 2 Chron. xi. 5, 6.
[2] Matt. xxiv. 17; Mark xiii. 15; Luke xvii. 31.

rosaries, olive-wood boxes, mother-of-pearl carved shells, and little jars and cups of asphalt, or red stone.

Talking of housetops reminds one of the variety of allusions to them in the Bible. Samuel communed with Saul on the housetop,[1] for privacy, so that his dwelling must have been flat-roofed. Absalom spread a tent on the top of David's house for his father's wives, that it might be seen by all Israel that he had assumed the throne, by his taking them as his own.[2] "It is better," says the Book of Proverbs, "to dwell in a corner of the housetop than with a brawling woman in a wide house;"[3] nor would it be any great hardship to do so in Palestine in the hot weather, for in the summer months the roof is the best sleeping-place. The text, however, doubtless means that even in the colder season any wretched spot, though exposed alike to rain and wind, is better than the best room with the company of a scold. Who would have thought that old Hebrew families were ever thus miserable?

When the paralytic was brought to Jesus, his bearers took him up the outside stairs, so common still in the court or yard, and carried him to the housetop. Many roofs have a hatchway opening into the room below, but closed in the cold months; and this having been lifted, it was easy to let the man down at the feet of the Saviour.[4] His couch, we may be sure, was simply a hammock, offering no difficulty to his entrance through the opening. To think of his bearers breaking up the roof, is out of the question. If cemented, it would be quite a task to do so, and the house would have been spoiled; nor would it have been much better had it been necessary to tear or break a way through a thick bedding of earth and boughs,

[1] 1 Sam. ix. 25.
[2] 2 Sam. xvi. 22.
[3] Prov. xxi. 9.
[4] Luke v. 19.

such as we find in some places. The crowd below would have been very soon scattered by such a rain of dust and clods—not to speak of broken sticks or stalks—as would have come down on them. There was just such a hatchway as I have described on the top of the schoolhouse of the American Mission at Assiout, in Egypt, and they are common in Palestine. Isaiah speaks of the people of Moab assembling on their housetops, "howling and weeping abundantly" at the news of the taking of their capital by the foe,[1] and of the population of Jerusalem as "wholly gone up to the housetops"[2] to look out for the Assyrians coming to attack them, or at the country people streaming through the gates for protection, or in hopes of catching sight of the standards of Tirhakah advancing to their deliverance.[3] Jeremiah, like Isaiah, predicted that there would be "lamentation upon all the housetops of Moab."[4] The Jews, in their apostasy, copied the evil example of Ahaz in erecting altars to the host of heaven on the top of his house,[5] for they built private ones for the same idolatry on their own roofs, and burnt incense upon them.[6] And Christ, again, tells His disciples to use the low housetops for a pulpit from which to proclaim the glad news He had told them.[7]

[1] Isa. xv. 3.
[2] Isa. xxii. 1.
[3] Geikie, *Hours with the Bible*, iv. 440.
[4] Jer. xlviii. 38.
[5] 2 Kings xxiii. 12.
[6] Zeph. i. 5; Jer. xix. 13.
[7] Matt. x. 27.

CHAPTER XX.

BETHLEHEM TO JERUSALEM.

It brings very forcibly before the mind how small a country Palestine is, to find that the chief scenes of David's life, before he reigned in Jerusalem, lie within a circle of not more than twelve or fifteen miles round his native village. It was only a three or four hours' journey for the boy from Bethlehem to Saul's camp at Socoh; and by starting early, as he would, he could readily have been among the fighting men in the beginning of the forenoon, so as to leave abundant time for his magnificent duel with Goliath. It would be little for one so strong and active, to go on his venturous challenge down the stony, brushwood-covered hill on which his brothers and the other Hebrews stood drawn up, across the half-mile of broad, flat valley, now covered every season with grain, then over the narrow trench in the middle full of white pebbles worn by the rain; nor would it have been more than a youth could do without special effort, to return again the same night to his father's house in Bethlehem. Adullam, Keilah, Carmel, Ziph, all lie within a small circle: David's adventures, indeed, during several years, may all be followed in a space smaller almost than any of our English counties.

But it was time to leave this most interesting spot, where, in David's own words—called forth, it may be, by the scenery round his native town—"the little hills rejoice

on every side: the pastures are clothed with flocks, and the valleys are covered over with corn."[1] It takes but a few minutes to strike a tent, and a very short time to pack it on the backs of the patient donkeys, so that we were soon on the way to Jerusalem. The road was thronged with town and country people, going to their gardens, or bringing loads from them. Asses quietly pattered on beneath huge burdens of cauliflowers large enough to rejoice the heart of an English gardener. Camels stalked up the hill with loads of building-stone: their drivers with clubs in their girdles. Men and women, in picturesque dress, passed this way and that as we jogged down towards Pilate's Aqueduct, which runs level with the ground, or nearly so, is covered with flat unhewn stones, and would be overlooked as only a common wall but for openings at intervals through which the running water is seen. The road turns straight to the north, with stony fields on the right, and a narrow open hollow of olives on the left, the ground slowly rising on this side, however, till at Rachel's grave, about a mile from Bethlehem, there is for the time a level space, well strewn, as usual, with stones of all sizes.

The place where the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, the patriarch Jacob's early and abiding love, is buried, is one of the few spots respecting which Christian, Jew, and Mahommedan agree. The present building consists of four square walls, each twenty-three feet long, and about twenty feet high, with a flat roof, from which a dome, with the plaster over it in sad disrepair, rises for about ten feet more. The masonry is rough: the stones set in rows, with no attempt at finish, or even exact regularity. Originally there was a large arch in each of the walls, which between them enclose an open space, but

[1] Ps. lxv. 13.

these arches have at some time been built up. The building dates, perhaps, from the twelfth century, though the earliest notice we have of it is a sketch in an old Jewish book of the year A.D. 1537. Joined to the back of it is another building consisting of four stone walls coarsely built, and about thirteen feet high, the space enclosed being thirteen feet deep and twenty-three feet broad—that is, as broad as the domed building; with a flat roof. Behind this again, the walls are continued, at the same height, for twenty-three feet more each way, forming a covered court, used for prayer by the Mahommedans. Under the dome stands an empty tomb of modern appearance, but entrance to this part, and also to the second chamber, is in the hands of the Jews, who visit it on Fridays. The pillar erected by Jacob has long since disappeared, having apparently been replaced at various times by different constructions. No part of the present building, I may say, except the high domed part, is older, apparently, than the present century.

The stone raised by Jacob in memory of his much-loved wife has been turned to wonderful account by recent "advanced critics" of the Old Testament, who have founded on this simple act the astounding assertion that Jacob and the patriarchs were sun-worshippers, and this poor headstone an idolatrous sun-pillar, such as were set up in the temples of Baal and Astarte, the foul gods of Canaan.[1] This amazing theory rests, like a pyramid on its sharp end, on the minute fact that the word for the obelisks raised to the sun-god was used also for such memorials as this tombstone to Rachel, or that erected in attestation of the covenant between Jacob and Laban, or for the stone set up by Jacob himself at Bethel on his return to Canaan, as a witness to the second

[1] Robertson Smith, *Old Test. in the Jewish Church*, pp. 226, 353.

covenant made with him there by Jehovah.[1] Twelve similar stones, described by the same word, were erected by Moses when the Twelve Tribes accepted the covenant made with them by God: [2] to remain a permanent proof of their having done so, and a silent plea for their fidelity. Did the great law-giver who proclaimed, "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah, our God, is one Jehovah," [3] and commanded that Israel should have no other gods before Him, or make any graven image, or likeness of anything in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth [4]—did this earnest and lofty soul, filled with loyalty to the one living and true God, set up twelve sun-pillars in honour of Baal? Credulity has gone a great way when it can believe this, nor can much be said for the modesty which would suggest it.

I own to a specially kindly feeling to Jacob from the story of his affection for his first love. How tender it was, is seen, as has been noticed already, by his going back to the scene of her death in his dying conversation with Joseph, more than forty years after he had lost her.[5] The headstone at Bethlehem was still before his eyes, in these last hours of his life, and she was as precious to him then as when she first won his heart, seventy years before. He had faults, and great ones, but the man who is capable of an unchanging love has a great deal in him to respect.

It is striking how much there is in the story of the patriarchs which the manners of the East even yet illustrate. The sending of Eliezer to Mesopotamia to get a wife for Isaac is exactly what the sheikh of an Arab tribe would do to-day. A Bedouin always marries in his own

[1] Gen. xxviii. 18, 22; xxxi. 13, 45, 51, 52; xxxv. 14.
[2] Exod. xxiv. 4—7.
[3] Deut. vi. 4 (Heb.).
[4] Exod. xx. 3, 4.
[5] Gen. xlviii. 7.

clan, and will take any trouble to do so, and the same custom prevails among the Hindoos;[1] while there was a strong religious motive in the directions of Abraham on this point—to keep his descendants from going over to the idolatry of Canaan.[2] What Isaac was doing when Rebekah came in sight has been vigorously disputed. Our Bible tells us he had gone out to meditate,[3] but a great German scholar maintains that he had gone out to collect dry stalks and weeds for the evening fire,[4] showing no little ingenuity in defence of his novel interpretation, which, indeed, had already been suggested by some of the rabbis. He could, to be sure, meditate while at his task, for one need not be idle to turn his thoughts in a serious direction, and in the East no detail of tent life is beneath a sheikh's personal attention; for we are told that even the great Abraham ran to the herd and, himself, "fetched a calf, and gave it to a young man, to kill and dress for his visitors."[5] Just as an Arab bride would do now in being brought to her future husband, Rebekah "lighted off the camel" and veiled herself,[6] because she would not ride while he was on foot, and she could not allow her face to be seen till she was his wife.

Isaac had been brought up, in childhood, in his mother Sarah's part of the tent, shut off from the men's part, and thither he took his bride, fortunately "loving her" when now for the first time he saw her. She would be led to it by her nurse and her maids who had come with her, but, one by one, these would leave her, till she was all alone with the nurse, wondering whether she would please Isaac when he came. After a time, the nurse would throw a shawl over her head, and, a signal having been given,

[1] Rosenmüller, *A. u. N. Morgenland*, i. 102.
[2] Gen. xxiv. 6.
[3] Gen. xxiv. 63.
[4] Bottcher, *Aehrenlese*, i. 19.
[5] Gen. xviii. 7.
[6] Gen. xxiv. 64, 65.

the curtain would be pushed aside for a moment, and the bridegroom would enter, and the nurse withdraw. Man and wife would thus for the first time be face to face. Now came the moment for removing the veil, or shawl, that hid the bride's face. If he had been a modern Oriental, Isaac would have said, "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful," and, then, raising the shawl, would greet his wife with the words, "Blessed be this night," to which her answer would be, "God bless thee." This was the first time Isaac had seen Rebekah unveiled, and it would be an anxious matter for the nurse and the maids, and, above all, for Rebekah herself, whether she pleased or disappointed her husband, for there might have been an anticipation of Jacob's trouble, by finding a Leah instead of a Rachel. But Rebekah's face pleased her future lord, as, indeed, the face of the bride generally does a bridegroom, and he would announce this fact to the anxious women outside, who, forthwith, no doubt, set up a shrill cry of delight, just as their sisters who stand in the same relation to a young wife do now. To the Semitic races this shout of the triumphant and satisfied bridegroom is one of the most delightful sounds that can be uttered, and has been so for immemorial ages; and it is to this our Saviour alludes when He says, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice." [1]

The character of Jacob was a duplicate of that of his mother. As her pet, she trained him, perhaps unconsciously, in her own faults, and he was clearly an apt scholar. The sister of Laban, a man full of craft and deceit like most Arabs, was not likely to be very open or straightforward. To make a favourite of one of a family,

[1] Ebers, *Egypt*, ii. 96. John iii. 29.

at least so as to show preference, is a sign of narrow, though perhaps deep, affection; but to overreach a husband like Isaac, for the injury of one of her two sons, was as heartless as it was ignoble. The wonder is that, with such a mother, Jacob was, in the end, even as worthy as he proved himself. His being a plain man, living in tents,[1] points to the contrast between the wild unsettledness of his brother and his own quiet, or, we might say, "domesticated" nature, and so does his life as a shepherd, roving about with his flocks and tents—a life greatly honoured among the Hebrews—while Esau spent his days in what they thought the rough, savage pursuits of a hunter. The red pottage of lentils for which Jacob bought the birthright,[2] is still a favourite dish among the poorer classes in the East; the lentils being first boiled, and then made tasty by mixing some fat with them,[3] or olive-oil and pepper. Barzillai, it will be remembered, brought a quantity of them, among other things, with him to Mahanaim, as a gift to David, during the rebellion of Absalom; and we find that in times of scarcity in the days of Ezekiel they were mixed with wheat and other grain, including spelt, to make bread.[4] Lentils are still grown in great quantities in Egypt, and largely in Palestine, where one might think them peas, at an early stage of their growth, for they rise only to a height of six or eight inches, and have tendrils and pods like the pea, though purple, not green. In England and Wales they are grown as food for cattle, though it would be a blessing for the peasantry if they recognised their rich nutritiousness, and used them for themselves. European children born in Palestine are passionately fond of lentil porridge; nature, unchecked by prejudice, turning eagerly to that

[1] Gen. xxv. 27.
[2] Gen. xxv. 30.
[3] Robinson, *Bib. Res.*, i. 246.
[4] Ezek. iv. 9.

which it finds best suited to its wants. Two kinds of the plant are grown, the brown and the red; the latter being the better.

The deceit of Rebekah and Jacob was sorely visited on both. It must have been a great trial to the mother to lose her favourite son for ever, for Jacob not only never saw his mother again, but lost all the fruit of his years of toil under his father, and had to begin the world again in Mesopotamia, with a very hard master; spending more than twenty years before he had flocks enough to be independent of him. But Isaac was not free from blame, for a father should not show favouritism in his family, especially if it rest to a large extent on so poor a basis as the love of savoury meat.[1] The gazelles which Esau hunted still abound in the Negeb, where Isaac had his tents; and it must have tasked Rebekah's skill to disguise a young kid so as to give it the flavour of the wild creature. It may seem strange to read that Isaac "smelled" Jacob's clothes,[2] but in India, to this day, a similar custom prevails; so that parents will compare the smell of a child to that of a fragrant plant, and a good man will be spoken of as having a sweet smell.[3]

The stone at Bethel[4] would have been a hard pillow for a European, but the thick turban of the Oriental, and the habit of covering the head with the outer garment during sleep, would make a cushion. The meeting with Rachel, like that of Eliezer with Rebekah, is true, in the minutest touches, to Eastern life. Abraham's deputy makes his camels kneel down, without the city, "by a well of water, at the time of evening; the time that women go out to draw water;" and so would an Arab now. Wells are commonly, though not always, just outside the towns;

[1] Gen. xxvii. 4.
[2] Gen. xxvii. 27.
[3] Roberts, *Indian Illustrations.*
[4] Gen. xxviii. 11.

and it is not only correct that evening is the time for drawing water, but that the task falls to the women. The peasant is then returning from his labour in the field, or driving home his small flock, and his wife and daughters have the evening meal to prepare, for which water is needed. It is, moreover, the cool of the day. At any Eastern village you meet long files of women thus occupied. That Rebekah should have carried her water-jar on her shoulder is another touch of exactness, for Syrian women still carry the jar thus, while their Egyptian sisters balance it on their heads.

It is striking, when we think of the place of our Saviour's birth, to read of the camels being brought into Laban's house.[1] I have often seen beasts thus put up with the household. In the same way we can restore the whole narrative of Jacob's meeting with Rachel,[2] from everyday life in the East at the present time. The well is in the field; that is, in the open pasture-land. Water being scarce, all the flocks, for miles round, meet at it to be watered. The heavy stone rolled over its mouth may be seen by any traveller in many parts of Palestine. The daughters of the flock-masters still go, in many places, to tend and water the flocks. You may see them thus engaged near almost any Arab tents in the plain of Sharon or of Philistia. That Laban kissed Jacob effusively is only what one sees Orientals doing every day, on meeting a neighbour or friend. The wily Syrian, in admitting that it was better to give Rachel to the son of Isaac than to another man, acted simply on the Bedouin law that a suitor has the exclusive right to the hand of his first cousin, so that even if he do not himself wish to marry her, she cannot be married without his consent. To give a female slave to a daughter, as part of her dowry, is

[1] Gen. xxiv. 31, 32. [2] Gen. xxix.

usual now, where means permit, so that Zilpah's being given to Leah at her marriage is another proof of the unchanging sameness of Eastern life in all ages. Excuses for sending home an elder daughter, instead of a younger, to the bridegroom, need still to be made in not a few cases, and are exactly the same as those with which Laban palliated the substitution of Leah for Rachel. The mandrakes found by Reuben, and craved by Rachel, are still in demand among Eastern women, in the same belief that they quicken love, and have other related uses. The plant is not rare in Palestine, and ripens in April or May. It has long, sharp-pointed, hairy leaves, of a deep green, springing from the ground, with dingy white flowers splashed with purple, and fruit which the Greeks called "love-apples," about the size of a nutmeg, and of a pale orange colour; the root striking down like a forked carrot. It is closely allied to the deadly nightshade, and has in all ages been famed, not only among women, but among men, in the latter case for its qualities as an intoxicant. From Leah and Rachel the interest in the mandrake passed down through each generation of their Hebrew descendants, so that we find its smell very appropriately introduced in the Song of Songs by the lovesick maiden, as awaiting her beloved if he go out with her to the vineyard.[1] The wish of a wife for a son, as a surety that her husband will not divorce her, is as much a characteristic of Eastern women to-day as it was in the time of the patriarch, as has been already noticed. So great an event is a son's birth that, as I have said, a father is no longer known by his own name after the son is born, but as the father of Abdallah, or Ibrahim, or whatever name the child receives.

The teraphim of Laban, carried off by Rachel, open a

[1] Cant. vii. 13.

curious chapter in the history of old Jewish religion. They were images, small enough to be stored in the large saddle-bags, or panniers, of Rachel's camel, and thus evidently much below the human size, and were regarded by Laban as his gods, the possession of which was of vital importance. Rachel, no doubt, shared in his opinion of their supernatural power, and had taken them, we may well suppose, that they might transfer to her husband some of the advantages of which he had been unjustly defrauded by her father. By Josephus they are called household gods,[1] which it was usual for the owner to carry with him for good fortune, if he went to a distance from home. How Laban made use of them is not told, though he speaks in one place of "divining,"[2] and probably did so by consulting them as oracles; just as we find Joseph, in Egypt, divining by a cup,[3] perhaps by the movements of water in it or of substances put into the water; the fondness for such superstition clinging to him through his mother. If we may judge from later instances, Laban's teraphim were decked with an ephod, as a medium for divine communications—a broad ornamented belt round the body, reaching from the armpits to the lower ribs; held in place by a strap or girdle of the same material, and also by cords from a broad collar or cape of the same stuff covering the shoulders.[4] It was on the front of such an ephod that the Jewish high priest, in later times, wore the oracular Urim and Thummim. Thus Micah, in Mount Ephraim, "had an house of gods, and made an ephod and teraphim," which Jonathan, the apostate descendant of Moses, whom Micah had made his priest, carried off to Dan, and used there for idolatrous worship.[5]

[1] Jos. *Ant.*, xviii. 9, 5.
[2] Gen. xxx. 27 (Heb.).
[3] Gen. xliv. 5.
[4] Riehm, p. 387.
[5] Judg. xvii. 5; xviii. 18—20.

The ephod, indeed, is mentioned in connection with teraphim as late as the time of Hosea, just before the overthrow of the Ten Tribes.[1] The Danites evidently believed in the oracular power of such a combination, since the discovery of it in Micah's possession led them at once to the conclusion that they could use it to see what they were to do next, in their adventurous journey on the war-path in search of a new home.[2] House-gods, in various forms, have always, indeed, been a great feature in idolatrous systems. Thus in the ruins of the great palace of Khorsabad, at Nineveh, Botta discovered under the threshold of the gates a number of statuettes in baked clay; images of Bel, Nergal, and Nebo, placed there, as an inscription tells us, "to keep away the wicked, and all enemies, by the terror of death."[3] Different parts of a house were placed under the protection of separate divinities; and a magic formula, which has been discovered, directs that a small image of one god ought to be placed at the court-gate of a house; of another, in the ground near the bed; of a third, inside the door; of a fourth, under the threshold of the door, at each side. We do not know of the Hebrews carrying their superstition so far as this, but the protection sought by means of the teraphim is closely allied to it, and the Israelites certainly sprang from an idolatrous stock, for Joshua states that their fathers, who dwelt on the other side of the Euphrates, served other gods than Jehovah.[4] Indeed, this ancestral tendency lingered among them till extirpated by the sharp discipline of the Captivity, and even after their return they could not wean themselves from dabbling in some forms of the black art.

The presence of such images, and also of magic charms and amulets implying faith in "strange gods," seemed,

[1] Hos. iii. 4.
[2] Judg. xviii. 4, 5.
[3] Lenormant, *La Magie*, p. 45.
[4] Josh. xxiv. 2.

however, to Jacob, incompatible with his appearing as he ought before Jehovah at Bethel, on his return to Western Palestine, and they were consequently buried under "the terebinth which was by Shechem," known apparently from that time as "the Terebinth of the Diviners."[1] But though it was thrust out from his own encampment, the patriarch could not uproot from his race the belief in their power. We have seen how Micah turned to them during the anarchy of the period of the Judges, and that his images continued to be reverenced and consulted at Dan till the Captivity. They must, moreover, have been very general even in later times, for we find David's wife, Michal, taking the household teraphim and laying it on the bed, with goat's hair over the brow, to imitate that of her husband—if, indeed, the hair of a common fly-net be not meant[2]—thus enabling him to escape from her father's messengers.[3] David's house could hardly be exceptional in such a matter, even apart from the fact that he moved in the front rank of "society," and would find abundant imitation on this ground alone, for fashion is set by royalty or position in all ages. Even so late as the fifth century before Christ, indeed, we find the Prophet Zechariah affirming that "the teraphim have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams:"[4] words which conclusively prove that teraphim were in his day consulted as oracles. The earnest-souled Josiah first made a raid on these images, and swept them away for the time,[5] though, we fear, hardly for a permanence, for we find that they were honoured by the Babylonians among whom the Captivity carried Israel; Ezekiel describing Nebuchadnezzar as standing where the roads parted, on one hand

[1] Judg. ix. 37 (Heb.).
[2] Herzog, *Real. Encycl.*, xv. 551, 2te Auf.
[3] 1 Sam. xix. 13, 14.
[4] Zech. x. 2.
[5] 2 Kings xxiii. 24.

to Rabbath of Ammon, and to Jerusalem on the other, consulting his teraphim as to which route he should take.[1]

The best account of this interesting feature in old Jewish religious life is that of Ewald.[2] "An image of this kind," he says, "did not consist of a single piece, but of several parts, at least when the owner cared to have one of the more elaborate and complete form. The simple image, made of stone or wood, was always that of a god in human form, sometimes as large as a man, but even in early times the bare image seemed too plain. It was, therefore, as a rule, plated with gold or silver, partly or as a whole, and hence the bitter words of the stricter worshippers of Jehovah, who abhorred all image-worship, and spoke of it contemptuously as the work of the carver or the metal-founder, whose arts united in the production of the idol. Where the precious metals were plentiful enough, however, the image might be formed entirely of them. To this point, therefore, a house-god, apart from its particular form, was prepared exactly like every other idol; something added to it formed the special characteristic of the primitive house-god of Israel. To understand this, it must particularly be remembered that these house-gods were used, from the earliest times, as means for obtaining oracles, or communications from above, so that the teraphim were, in fact, strictly identical with the idols which performed oracles. To equip them for this purpose, an ephod was put on the image; an elaborate tippet round the shoulders, to which was fixed a pouch, containing the pebbles or other lots used for determining oracles, as the Urim and Thummim were hung on the breast of the high priest. A kind of mask was next set on the head of the idol, from which, apparently, the priest seeking an oracle decided

[1] Ezek. xxi. 21. [2] Ewald, *Alterthümer*, p. 297.

by some sign whether or not the god would give a response at the time. These masks were needed to complete the image, and hence they got from them the name teraphim, a nodding countenance or living mask. At the same time, we can understand how the teraphim are described, now as of human size and form, and elsewhere as so small and light that they could be hidden under a camel-saddle; for the two chief oracular details—the ephod and the mask—were the main things, especially in a house-god, long and tenderly preserved and loved. Such, one cannot doubt, were the primitive house-gods of Israel, and if we consider the extraordinary tenacity with which everything of a domestic character held its ground, with little change, in spite of the fundamentally opposed principles of the religion of Jehovah, it is not surprising that many sought protection and oracular communications from these family idols, through centuries, fancying, however, that it was Jehovah Himself who spoke through them."

From the sad spot where he buried his well-loved Rachel, Jacob wandered on towards the south, with his tents and his motherless babe—a son of sorrow to her who was gone, but the son of his right hand[1] to the broken-hearted father—and encamped on the way to Hebron near a tower built for the protection of shepherds and their flocks;[2] folds, of dry stone, with prickly bushes laid on the top of the walls, as is the custom now, being, no doubt, connected with it. Hebron and its neighbourhood seems to have been the permanent home of the patriarch, so far as his black tents, pitched on one of the slopes near, could be called home, till he went down to Egypt on Joseph's invitation.[3] He and his tribe

[1] Gen. xxxv. 18.

[2] This is the meaning of "the tower of Edar" (Gen. xxxv. 21).

[3] Gen. xxxv. 27; xlvi. 1.

differed, however, in one point from modern Arabs—they had no horses, so far as we know, though the horse was so abundant in Palestine in the time of Thothmes III., who reigned from B.C. 1610 to B.C. 1556,[1] that he captured 2,041 mares and 191 fillies at the battle of Megiddo, which was fought about 250 years after the death of Jacob. The Hebrews, as "plain men living in tents" in their earlier history, and as simple hill-men after their successful invasion of Canaan, never adopted the horse till Solomon introduced it from Egypt to gratify his inordinate love of display and self-indulgent extravagance. Hence they were known, among the peoples who boasted of cavalry, for their use of the ass instead of the nobler animal. There is, in accordance with this, a painting on the walls of a tomb at Benihassan, on the Nile, of the arrival, about the time of Abraham's visit to Egypt, of a Semitic family desiring leave to settle in the Nile valley: their goods being carried on asses, the only beast of burden they appear to have. It was alleged, indeed, in later ages, so identified with the ass did the Hebrews become, that, having been driven from Egypt as lepers, they were guided to a supply of water by an ass in their journey thence, and, in consequence, they worshipped the race of their four-footed benefactor. It was said, also, that when Antiochus Epiphanes forced his way into the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem, he found there the stone likeness of a long-bearded man, who sat on an ass, and whom he took for Moses. From this, the rumour spread that the Jews worshipped an ass's head of gold in their Holy of Holies. The slander, doubtless, arose, at first, from the worship of the ass by the Egyptians, as the symbol of their god Typhon, who was said to have fled through the wilderness on one of these

[1] Ebers, in Riehm.

animals.[1] It is striking, however, to notice how easily the story might arise, for Abraham's ass is mentioned more than once in the Bible; Issachar was compared by Jacob to a strong ass; Achsah rode on an ass; the princes and nobles rode on asses; the asses of Kish are famous; Moses set his wife and his sons on an ass which the Rabbis have honoured with the most astounding fables; and the sons of Jacob took asses for the corn they were to bring back from Egypt.[2]

That such comparatively feeble creatures can stand a journey across the desert, is known to every traveller in the East. Camels are employed for the most part, but donkeys are always found as part of a caravan; and I have seen large droves of horses on the way to Egypt from Damascus. The fact is that water, the want of which is thought to make travelling over the desert wastes practicable only for camels, is found in almost any direction, in quantities sufficient for either horses or asses. Camels can bear thirst for days together, and other animals can do with far less drinking than is supposed. Only one day's journey between Palestine and Cairo is quite waterless, and any muddy brackish supply found in some desert hollow on the second day suffices. Water for human beings is sometimes carried in skins, but this provision is not needed for animals.

The sky over Bethlehem, the night before leaving it, brought forcibly to my mind the promise given to Abraham,[3] when he was "brought forth abroad" from his tent and told to look up to the stars, which, innumerable as they seemed, his posterity was to outnumber.

[1] J. G. Müller, in *Studien und Kritiken*, 1843, pp. 906—912, 930—935.

[2] Gen. xxii. 3, 5; xlix. 14; Ex. iv. 20; Josh. xv. 18; Judg. v. 10; Zech. ix. 9; Gen. xliv. 3.

[3] Gen. xv. 5.

The spectacle of the heavens at night is at all times magnificent in Palestine, for the heavenly bodies, instead of merely shining afar, like gems inlaid in the firmament, hang down like resplendent lamps, beyond which one looks away into the infinite. That the patriarch should have risen so far above his contemporaries as to regard these moving orbs as the work of an invisible Creator, is assuredly to be explained only on the hypothesis of a revelation granted to him. For, even now, how inscrutable is the mystery of nature, after all our science; how complicated the theories of its origin and continuance; how profound the ignorance implied in the latest attitude of science—the simple acceptance of facts as they stand, without an attempt to rise to any intelligent first cause! That the heavenly bodies should be worshipped in such a climate as that of Syria or Mesopotamia in ages when science was as yet unborn, and motion, or impulse of any kind, seemed to indicate life, was as inevitable as the fancies of a child at the whirl of a leaf or the flow of water. Mankind were children in the infancy of the world, and their religions the religions of children. How wonderful that Abraham, bred amidst such mental simplicity, should have risen, not only above his own age, but above all ages since, outside the teaching of the Bible! It was intensely interesting, moreover, to look up, in David's own village, on the skies which he had watched with the eyes of a poet, and whose glory, as a tribute to that of Jehovah, he had sung, perhaps on the very hills lying asleep in the moonlight round me, in the hallowed strains—

> "O Jehovah, our God,
> How excellent is Thy name in all the earth!
> Who hast set Thy glory upon the heavens.
> When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers,

The moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained,
What is man, that Thou art mindful of him,
And the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" [1]

A little north of the grave of Rachel, part of the soil is thickly covered with stones, about the size of peas. Christ, says the legend, was once passing here, when a peasant was sowing peas on this spot, and, being asked what he sowed, churlishly answered, "Stones." "For this answer," said Christ, "you will reap stones," and from that time the ground was barren, and covered with the pea-like stones we see. Many pilgrims, travellers, and country people were passing to Bethlehem, or going from it to the capital, some on horses, others on asses, but most on foot. A band of Americans of both sexes, young and old, rode on together to David's city in high spirits; some Englishmen were forcing their beasts into a gallop northwards; a Greek woman with a child was moving slowly forward on an ass, the husband walking at the creature's side and quickening its tired pace by rough words. Peasant-women were returning from Jerusalem, each with an empty basket on her head, stepping on bravely in their narrow blue dresses, without any thought of hiding their natural shape by any tricks of fashion, and shortening the way with loud, cheerful banter and gossip. Lines of camels, laden or without burdens, stalked with awkward, slow steps towards Hebron. The ground sinks a little after we pass Rachel's grave, then rises again as we approach the large building known as the Monastery of Elias, which is inhabited by a few Greek monks who fondly believe that the prophet Elijah rested here in his flight from Jezebel,[2] leaving his footprint in the rock as a memorial. Unfortunately, it is known that the original

[1] Ps. viii. 1—4.

[2] 1 Kings xix. 3.

building was erected by a Bishop Elias, at an early date, so that the claim on behalf of the prophet is more than usually apocryphal. A comparatively fruitful valley lies below the monastery, running to the east, but the hills in every direction are as rough and bare as the most barren parts of the Scotch Highlands. The view from the monastery hill, however, is remarkably fine. To the south stand the white houses of Bethlehem on their height; on the north, beyond a broad plain, rise the walls and buildings of Jerusalem—the high, sloping top of Neby Samwil closing the view on the distant horizon; on the east the eye wanders over hills, sinking, wave after wave, towards the Dead Sea, of which part lies, in deepest azure, between these and the yellow-red table-land of Moab, which seems, in the transparent air, only a few miles distant. On the west the landscape is shut in by high ridges of hills. This spot, from which the traveller coming from the south first sees Mount Moriah, the site of the Jewish Temple, wakes the tenderest recollections in every heart that reverences the Father of the Faithful. Here Abraham, on his sad journey from Beersheba, at God's command that he should offer his only and well-loved son Isaac on Moriah, first came in sight of the hill. It was on the third day of his torturing ride from the south that, lifting up his eyes, he saw the place afar off. "Then Abraham said to his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you."[1] This must have been spoken just about where the Monastery of Elias now stands, and yet, strange to say, the monks have thought only of fables respecting Elijah, and have never realised the peculiar interest of their dwelling in connection with Abraham and his son. The land round the monastery is carefully

[1] Gen. xxii. 4, 5.

tilled, and fenced with strong walls of dry stone, gathered with heavy labour from the surface of the ground to make it fit for cultivation. The monks have also planted fine olive-groves, and show the real benefit such a colony may be in a wild region, when industrious and intelligent. The building itself is strong enough to resist a Bedouin attack should one at any time be made.

The road sank very gently from Mar Elias towards the north, and presented the very unusual sight, in Palestine, of gangs of men at work to make it passable for carriages. Levelling, filling up, smoothing, were all in progress; the labourers swarming, in turbans, fezzes, wide "abbas," or close cotton shirts, and bare-legged, in all directions. Such a phenomenon, in any part of the Turkish Empire, well deserves notice. How long the spurt of activity will last, who gave the money, and who will get it finally, are all questions more easily asked than answered. Still sinking, the road leads gradually to the Valley of Hinnom, through stony slopes, sprinkled, as I passed, with the green of rising crops; but very different from English land, for there were, as it seemed, more stones than grain. It was the Valley of Rephaim, and promised what in Palestine is thought a rich harvest, such as it yielded when Isaiah, passing perhaps along this very track in the summer, saw "the harvest-man gathering the corn, and reaping the ears with his arm."[1] But one might look in vain for the wood of mulberry-trees behind which David, thanks in part to the rustling of the leaves in the wind,[2] was able to steal, unperceived, upon the Philistines when encamped in this valley. It was here, also, that at another time these foes of Israel were gathered when the three braves broke through their host and brought David the water from the well at the Gate of Bethlehem.[3] The wide plain

[1] Isa. xvii. 5. [2] 2 Sam. v. 22—25. [3] 2 Sam. xxi i. 13—16.

it offers for nearly two miles before one reaches Jerusalem made Rephaim, in fact, the scene of many a fierce onslaught in ancient times between the Hebrews and their invaders.

The road now crosses the Valley of Hinnom, over which the walls of Jerusalem look down, at this part, across a pleasant slope dotted with olive and other trees. The aqueduct from Solomon's Pools passes to the side of the valley next the city, just above the Lower Pool of Gihon; and our path crossed close below it, after passing a row of cottages built on the hill-side for his fellow Israelites by the late Sir Moses Montefiore. To the left, as we rose out of the Valley of Rephaim, the long upward slope of the hill, facing the west side of the city, was covered with olives; and there was also a windmill. Passing along the east side of the pool the road kept straight north, on the east side of the valley, which was not broad; a steady rise of nearly 200 feet in all bringing us at last to the Joppa Gate, past the gardens of the Armenian monastery within the walls, and past the mossy citadel with its great slanting foundations, cut off from the road by a deep fosse, into which it jutted out in grim strength, one of the few relics of the great Herod. My feet stood at last within the gates of Jerusalem!

CHAPTER XXI.

JERUSALEM.

The Joppa Gate, by which I entered the Holy City, stands near the north-west angle of the walls, rising on the south side from a deep hollow inside the wall, but standing on ground level with the road in all other directions. It is a castle-like building about fifty feet high, with battlemented top, very unfit now, however, to bear guns of even the lightest calibre, for the stones are but slightly held together by the rotten mortar, and, indeed, have fallen down at some spots. Grass grows where the watchman once looked out, and time has for centuries been allowed to play what freaks it pleased. As in many other gates, there is a turn at right angles before you get through: a plan adopted in olden days to help the defence. The front is, perhaps, forty feet across in all; the sides, about eighteen feet deep; the entrance, from the city side, is through a comparatively narrow gate, which fits roughly into the lower part of a high pointed arch, filled in with masonry above and at the sides to suit the rickety door. In the bow of the arch, about twenty feet above the ground, is an inscription in Arabic, and on the door itself are a very rude star and crescent, the emblems of Turkish rule. Outside, the Joppa road stretches up a slope, lined for a short distance on the upper side by some shops and houses, including the British Consul's

office; an open space spreading out on the other side, covered more or less with the booths of small dealers, donkeys waiting for hire, and a native café, of wood, before which numbers of labourers and workmen sit on low stools, smoking water-pipes, at all hours. Eating or drinking they do not indulge in; water-pipes seeming to be all that the café supplies.

A low wall, rising from the ditch and overgrown with leaves and stalks, runs along, inside the gate, on the right hand of the Tower of David. On the left the first sample of the domestic architecture of Jerusalem that one meets is a wretched house, about twelve feet high and eight broad, on a line with the left side of the gate; its front showing only decaying plaster, a rough door, and a small window, so high that no one can see through it; the tiled roof broken and moulting. One or two other hovels and a higher serpentine wall, turning hither and thither on its private account, to shut in some wretchedness or other, complete the picture. Camels passing through the gate took up for the moment all its available space as they stalked on, looking, as these creatures always do, straight before them, and meekly following a dark-skinned Arab who strode on in front, in white "kefiyeh" and cotton shirt, with bare legs; a water-bottle in one hand, a cord from the nose of the foremost camel in the other, and a bundle on his back. A gentleman in a fez and striped "abba" sat on the ground, with his back to the gate, behind a modest display of fruit, chiefly oranges, set out on flat dishes and extemporised trays made from old boxes. Beside him stood a brother Jerusalemite, enjoying the shade of the gate, and looking quite dignified in a turban and flowing brown-and-white "abba" as he indulged in a quiet gossip with the fruit merchant at his feet. Three or four donkeys, unemployed

for the moment, were smelling the low limestone wall, or biting each other; a less fortunate member of their race pattered on under a baggy-breeched figure; a donkey-boy was looking at a turbaned purchaser who had sat down on nothing, as only Orientals can, and was resting on his feet, his knees at his mouth, as he cheapened the terms on which a lady, sitting in the same attitude on the other side of some native brown unglazed earthenware dishes and jars, was willing to part with these treasures; both carefully using the scanty shadow of the wall during their solemn and protracted negotiations. Two grave turbaned figures stood behind, resting against the parapet in all the delight of idleness. The donkeys, and some pedestrians who had buttonholed each other for a chat, filled up, in a loose way, the space between this side of the street and the opposite, where another fruit merchant had extemporised a rude shade of old matting and branches, propped on a few sticks of all sizes, and dipping sadly in the middle. Under this, sat a man on the ground, with a water-bottle at his lips, as I passed, and open palm baskets of fruit on all sides. Near him, and connected with the same establishment, an old man sat on the ground, with his legs, for a wonder, straight out in front, bargaining with a donkey-boy as to how many oranges he could afford to give for a farthing: a transaction which two bearded, turbaned citizens, in flowing robes, were following with rapt attention. Two camels went by, one tied to the other's coarse wooden pack-saddle, both with a large bag on each side, and surmounted by two human figures in "kefiyehs," with stout sticks, and faded linen, seated on the humps of the animals, with their legs crossed above the neck, as the brutes swayed slowly onwards. At every step such Oriental phenomena, human and four-footed, filled the way more numerously, as my

horse paced wearily on, past the citadel, down the slope to the hotel where I was to put up.

The population of the city is one of its great attractions; one can never weary of looking at the endless variety of dress and occupation. An open space before the hotel was delightful for the human kaleidoscope it offered. Day by day you could watch kneeling camels waiting to be hired or to receive their loads, and waving lines of men and women, the one in "abbas," the other in the female counterpart, the "izar," sitting on the stones, or on a sack, with their knees on a level with their chins, behind heaps of cauliflowers, lemons, onions, radishes, oranges, and other fruit or vegetables, hoping for customers who seemed never to come. The wall towards the Joppa Gate, and in front of the citadel, which occupied the corner of the open space, was a favourite haunt of lowly tradesfolk. A few short poles resting on the ground and on the top of the low wall formed a frame over which to spread an old mat, laid on a shaky roof of sticks, nailed or tied together, the horizontal poles serving to display all kinds of wares, dangling from them; a few box-tops, or mat baskets, or sacks spread on the ground, letting the public into the secret of the extra stores awaiting their coin. A tempting display of wire, a wooden mouse-trap, a sheaf of ancient umbrellas in various stages of decay, but about to be resuscitated, filled up some yards of wall. An old man, with his back resting against the stones, and a few rags below him for cushion, a white turban on his head, an old brown striped "abba" over some unknown under-garment, and a long pipe in his hand, sat with the gravity of a pasha at the side of three small baskets of lemons, raisins, and figs: his whole stock-in-trade, worth in all, perhaps, a shilling. A low rush stool at his side was set for any chance purchaser.

As I passed, a filthy camel swung slowly down the rough stones of the street, with a huge barrel balanced on each side. Jews were numerous in wideawakes, or in flat cloth caps with fur round them, a lovelock hanging at each ear; their dress a long black gown over a yellow tunic fitting the body and reaching the feet. A bread-seller displayed some questionable brown "scones" on a board, laid on two small boxes; himself seated on a bag on the ground; his outfit, a large white turban, a striped cotton tunic extending to his ankles, and a patched black stuff jacket; all, like himself, the worse for wear. A bead and trinket seller had his wares spread out on a bit of brown sacking, alongside the wall, with a small packing-box before him—his counter by day, and his safe at night. Each morning fresh cauliflowers rose in banks and mounds, on the two stone steps opposite the hotel, with a passage left in the middle of the street for traffic. A venerable figure with a great white beard, surmounted by a white turban, and set off with a striped "abba," sat near by, cross-legged, on some rags, beside a few fly-blown figs of the year before, not larger than nuts; his scales beside him, as if anyone would ever think of investing in his poor display! Near at hand, another cross-legged patriarch presided over some oranges and lemons, in all the dignity of a white turban, a blue cotton coat reaching to his calves, and an old coloured sash round his waist. Passing in front of him was a knife-grinder, carrying his wheel on his back, ready to set it down when a job offered, and shouting his presence, to attract customers. Water-carriers, in skull-caps or turbans, bare-armed and bare-legged, moved about with black skins full of the precious fluid, which they were taking to houses to empty into the domestic water-jars, sometimes through a hole in the wall; for it is not always reckoned safe to allow a man

to enter the kitchen and thus see the other sex in the household.

Well-to-do men occasionally brightened the general air of poverty; one, for example, in a long blue cloth coat lined with fur, a white turban, yellow baggy breeches, a white vest, and a bright-coloured sash. Women with bundles of fagots upon their heads for fuel; ridiculous-looking Armenian females with baggy breeches instead of petticoats; Turkish soldiers in shabby blue uniform; an occasional American, Englishman, or Continental European; a woman with a child astride her shoulders; some Russian pilgrims, who had, perhaps, walked from Archangel to Constantinople, with fine manly beards, fur, mortar-board-like caps, long warm great-coats, thick boots, or shoes, their legs, where they had not boots over their trousers, tied up with cross-straps, over warm wrappings which served for stockings; beggars with long sticks in their hands, and the oddest mockery of cotton clothing; a peasant with his plough on his shoulder, taking it to the smith to mend or sharpen; camels with huge loads of olive-cuttings, or fagots, for fuel, the driver in a "kefiyeh" sitting aloft over all, with the guiding-rope in one hand and a long pipe in the other—all this was only a sample of the ever-changing spectacle of the street.

The citadel, which rose almost opposite my hotel, is one of the most striking features of the Holy City. It stands on Mount Zion, in the middle of the western side, occupying, with its ditch and walls, about 150 yards from north to south, and about 125 from east to west; another space, seventy-five yards square, being taken up on the south side by the Turkish barracks. Beyond these the splendid garden of the Armenian monastery runs, for another 250 yards, inside the wall; the fortress, barracks, and garden occupying a continuous strip within the wall,

a little less than 500 yards in length; the west side, in fact, of Mount Zion. How great a piece this is of the city may be judged by the size of the whole town, omitting the great Temple grounds to the east, now those of the Mosque of Omar. From north to south, it is about 1,200 yards from the Damascus Gate to the Zion Gate, and it is about 700 yards from the Joppa Gate, on the west, to the Temple grounds on the east. Add to this a square of less than 400 yards, joining the north end of the Temple space, and you have the entire city; the area once sacred to the Temple, which also is within the walls, filling up an extra 300 yards or so of breadth, and a length of about 500 yards. The walk round the walls, which, of course, enclose everything—monasteries, gardens, Temple space, citadel, streets, and churches—is about two miles and a half. But it is about three miles and a half round Hyde Park, including Kensington Gardens.[1]

The western side of the city is slightly higher than the eastern: the ground near the Joppa Gate and on Mount Zion, to the south of it, lying about 2,550 feet above the sea, while the Temple space is 110 feet lower. There is thus a slope to the east in all the streets running thence from the west, although the levels of the ancient city have been greatly modified by the rubbish of war and peace during three thousand years. The Jerusalem of Christ's day lies many feet beneath the present surface, as the London of Roman times is buried well-nigh twenty feet below the streets of to-day. The citadel stands at nearly the highest point of the town, and as it was thus connected originally with the great palace and gardens which Herod created for himself at this point, it

[1] Measured on Baedeker's plan of Jerusalem, and the plan in Murray's Handbook of London, of course only approximately. Robinson makes the circumference of Jerusalem the same as I do.

is only necessary to imagine the space now covered by the barracks and the Armenian garden as once more occupied by a magnificent pile of buildings and pleasure-grounds, to bring back the aspect of this portion, at least, of the Jerusalem of our Lord's day. All remains of Herod's grand structure are buried, however, beneath more than thirty feet of rubbish, with the exception of portions of two of the three great towers which he built on the north side of his grounds. "These huge fortresses," says Josephus, "were formed of great blocks of white stone, so exactly joined that each tower seemed a solid rock." One of them, named after his best-loved but murdered wife, Mariamne, has entirely vanished, but Phasaelus and Hippicus still in part survive. When they guarded the wall, thirty cubits high, which entirely surrounded Herod's palace, with its decorated towers at intervals rising still higher, they must have been imposing in their strength, to judge from the noblest relic they offer —the so-called Tower of David, which seems to have been part of the Phasaelus Tower, or perhaps of Hippicus, for authorities differ upon the subject. It stands on a great substructure rising, at a slope of about 45°, from the ditch below, with a pathway along the four sides at the top. Above this, the tower itself, for twenty-nine feet, is one solid mass of stone, and then follows the superstructure, formed of various chambers. The masonry of the substructure is of large drafted blocks, many of them ten feet long, with a smooth surface; that of the solid part of the tower has been left without smoothing. Time has dealt hardly with the stone of the superstructure, which is comparatively modern, but even that of the solid base and the substructure is rough with lichens and a waving tangle of all kinds of wall-plants. Still, as one looks up from the street, it seems as if the shock of a

battering-ram could have had little effect on the sloping escarpment, or the solid mass over it. Nor would escalade have been easy, if possible, when the masonry was new, so smooth and finely jointed is the whole. Besides other buildings, there are in the citadel grounds five towers, once surrounded by a moat, which is now filled up. The outer side of one of these, the second of Herod's three, rises from a deep fosse at the side of the road below the Joppa Gate, as you go down the Valley of Hinnom, and helps one to realise still more forcibly the amazing strength of the ancient portions of these structures.

Desirous to have a view of Jerusalem from a height, I ascended to the top of the Tower of David. The entrance from the open space before it is through a strong but time-eaten and neglected archway, surmounted by pinnacles, the fleurs-de-lis on the top of which, half grown over by grass and rank weeds, show the work of those wondrous builders, the Crusading princes. Half the central archway is built up, leaving open a pointed gate, over which a clumsy wooden ornament represents two crescent moons. On the right is a recess in the wall for the sentries; on the left a side gate; the recess and side gate, alike, arched and small. A rough platform of three rows of stone, ascended by steps, juts out before the recess, and on this a sentinel stands, scimitar or gun in hand—another standing at the centre gate: strong men from some distant part of the empire, perhaps from Kurdistan, perhaps from Asia Minor. Some town dogs lay below the rude bank of stone at the guard-house door, asleep by day, noisy enough by night. A man sat on a rush stool beside the low wall, smoking his water-pipe; a second lay on the ground; a third had a small, low, round table before him, with a few oranges for sale; pending the arrival of a customer, he was gravely sucking the long coiled tube of

a water-pipe, or hubble-bubble, holding discourse, in the intervals of breath-taking, with the two gentlemen on the ground near him, or with a fourth who stood, in flowing robes, slippered feet, and turban, propping himself against his stick, a fierce club-like affair, Of course he was bare-legged. In Europe, all four would have been tattered beggars; but they looked quite dignified in Eastern costume. A causeway, slightly raised above the rough cobble stones of the open square, led through the gateway, over the ditch, by a wooden bridge in very poor condition, and originally of carpentry so primitive that it might have been antediluvian, though really Turkish and modern. Stairs on the outside of the great tower led half-way up its height, beyond the solid base, and the rest was scaled by other stairs inside, by no means safe, for the Turk never repairs anything. Round the top is a parapet, through the embrasures of which cannon might be turned on the city, which the position commands. But though there were some guns on the cemented roof, it is a question whether any of them were in a condition to be used, for, like everything else, they were far gone in decay.

The view from this point was very striking. Close at hand to the south, beyond the barracks, were the noble gardens of the Armenian monastery, not only part of the grounds of Herod's palace nearly two thousand years ago, but perhaps of those of David and Solomon's gardens, for these also covered the western top of Mount Zion. One could understand how difficult the victory of Titus must have been, with three such castles to take, for, looking down into the ditch, it seemed as if this one, at least, must have been impregnable before the discovery of gunpowder. It was easy, moreover, to understand how the Egyptian warriors so long withstood, within these strong-

holds, the Crusaders under Godfrey of Bouillon and his companions. Looking over the houses of the city, the eye was bewildered by the multitude of small domes rising from the flat roofs, to protect the tops of the stone arches below, for the houses are all built arch above arch, wood being scarce and stone plentiful. Of course, everything was old and weatherbeaten; every wall-top feathered with grass and weeds; the walls unspeakably rude in their masonry; the one or two sloping roofs that showed themselves, very woe-begone; everything indeed marking a city far sunk in decay, and at best only holding together while it could, with no prospect of returning to vigorous life. A party of men were on a flat roof near, smoking; a poor little child, very likely a slave, standing on one side of the low dome with a tray and coffee-cups on the ground beside him, and a man leaning against the other side of the dome, as he played with his water-pipe. A slight puff of kitchen-smoke here and there showed where the small fires used for Oriental cookery were alight. Several parapets had triangles of open clay cylinders in them, for look-out holes and air, as is common in Eastern towns. On one roof some clothes were drying. A solitary palm-tree rose aloft out of a court. On one house-top a flat awning of mats had been raised on poles, and under this were a group of idlers. Windows seemed almost absent, for the Oriental has no idea of ventilation. He never has windows on the ground-floor, and even those higher up are either miserably small openings in the wall, or rough projecting woodwork, which leaves only a small place for lattices. There were, of course, some better houses; but, as a whole, one might fancy himself to be looking down on an East End district of London. Few houses were more than two storeys high.

Beyond the city, nature redeems the sordid outlook

over these miserable human abodes. The hills rise on every side, recalling the words of the Psalmist, who, from some such eminence as that on which I stood, had cried out, "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even for ever."[1] On some such point of vantage, also, the prophet had imagined himself set as a warder, when he saw with the eye of the spirit, as if before him, the restoration of the city, after it had been laid desolate by the Chaldæans, and cried aloud at the prophetic sight of the herald bringing the announcement that Jehovah was returning to Zion, Himself the leader of Israel from captivity, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! The voice of thy watchmen! they lift up the voice, together do they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, now the Lord returneth to Zion."[2]

The four hills, north, east, and south, on which the city is built, could, more or less, be traced beneath by deeper or slighter depressions of the view. The hill on the north, on which the huge copper dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre rises between two Mahommedan minarets, continues to mount with a very gradual ascent beyond the walls, presenting the only easy approach to Jerusalem from any side, and hence offering the point from which hostile armies have always assailed it. It was from this plateau that Godfrey de Bouillon stormed the city, and on the height 600 yards northwest of the Joppa Gate, where now rise the buildings of the Russian Hospice, the tents of Titus once stood.

On the north of the Temple grounds, and thus at the

[1] Ps. cxxv. 2. [2] Isa. lii. 7. 8.

north-east corner of the city, lies the hill Bezetha, part of the Mahommedan quarter of Jerusalem, the rest of which extends, on the north, to the Damascus Gate, and, thence, down to the street which runs east from the Joppa Gate. The Temple space is thus guarded by Mahommedans at its different entrances. The corner between the Damascus Gate and the Joppa Gate, on the north-west, is assigned to the Roman Catholics and the Greeks, and the rest, from the south side of the street, running east from the Joppa Gate, is divided between the Armenians and the Jews, these latter having the consolation of knowing that their district borders, in part, the wall of their deeply-loved Mount Moriah. Directly east, and slightly lower, lay the wide open area, of somewhat less than thirty-five acres, where once stood the Temple.[1] On the south-west stretched out Mount Zion, the highest and oldest part of the city; that part which David wrested from the Jebusites, and made his capital. The city wall at one time enclosed the whole of the hill, but it now runs, south-west, across it, leaving on the spot where, perhaps, once stood the palace of Solomon, an open space, on which are the Christian cemetery and the Protestant schools. Part, however, is still open ground, where the peasant drives his plough over the wreck of the City of David, fulfilling, even to this day, the words of Micah, that Zion would be ploughed as a field.[2] But the most extensive view was to the south-east, where the deep blue of the Dead Sea, the pinkish-yellow hills of Moab, and the sea of hills in the wilderness of Judæa and beyond it, lay within the horizon. Most noticeable of all, just outside Jerusalem, sloping upwards to the east, the noble form of the Mount of Olives rose

[1] It is an irregular parallelogram, measuring on the west 536 yards; on the east, 512 yards; on the north, 348 yards; on the south, 309 yards.

[2] Micah iii. 12.

more than 200 feet above the Temple enclosure[1]—that is, above the summit of the ancient hill of Moriah.

The back windows of the hotel looked down into a great pool 144 feet broad, and 240 feet long, but not deep; the bottom, of rock, covered with cement. It was well filled with water, which comes, during the rainy season only, by the surface drain, or gutter, leading from the "Upper Pool" in the Mahommedan cemetery, on the high ground about 600 yards west of the Joppa Gate, from which point it runs underground. This seems to be the reservoir which Hezekiah constructed when he "made a pool and a conduit, and stopped the upper water-course of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David,"[2] and "digged the hard rock with iron, and made wells for water."[3] Its south side is separated only by a line of houses from the street; the Coptic monastery is at its northern end, and at a little distance to the north-west is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, with its high dome and its unfinished tower. The houses bordering the pool are of all heights; one with a sloping roof and a projecting rickety balcony, just above the water; another, roofed in the same way, but more than a storey higher, with a square wooden chamber, supported by slanting beams, built out, partly, it would seem, to let the inmates drop a bucket through a hole in the floor, to the water. A frame of poles covered one flat roof, to serve as support for a mat awning in the hot months, a wooden railing acting as parapet on the pool side; projecting windows, larger or smaller, were frequent, one with boxes of flowers outside; and, of course, the roofs had their usual proportion of men

[1] The respective heights are 2,440 feet and 2,663 feet.
[2] 2 Kings xx. 20; 2 Chron. xxxii. 30.
[3] Ecclus. xlviii. 17.

idling over their pipes. As everywhere else, the walls round the pool were thick with naturally-sown wall-plants, the very emblem of a neglect which extended, perhaps, over centuries. The pool is capable of containing about 3,000,000 gallons of water, but it is in very bad repair. As to cleaning it out, nothing so revolutionary ever entered the brain of a Jerusalemite. The bottom is deep with the black mud of decayed leaves and vegetation, and one corner is a cesspool of the worst description. The water is said to be used only for household washing, but the poorer people frequently drink it in summer, when water is scarce, though it is then in its worst condition, having lain stagnant, perhaps for months, since the rains.

A few steps down David Street—the lane leading east and west from the Joppa Gate to the Temple enclosure—brings you to Christian Street, which runs north; and close to this, on the under side, is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. But what would anyone think of the street called after the hero-king of Israel, if suddenly set down at the end of it! It is a lane rather than a street, with houses, for the most part only two storeys high, on each side, the lower one being given up to shops, if you can call such dens by so respectable a name. Over the doors a continuous narrow verandah of wood, built at a slant into the houses, gives shade to the goods, but when it was put up or repaired in any way is an insolvable historical problem. Its condition, therefore, may be easily fancied. The causeway of the street is equally astonishing, for even a donkey, most sure-footed of animals, stops, puts its nose to the ground, and makes careful calculations as to the safe disposition of its feet, before it will trust them to an advance. No wonder there are no people in the streets after dark; without a lantern

they would infallibly sprain their ankles, or break a leg, each time they were rash enough to venture out. But during the day the stream of many-coloured life flows through this central artery of the Holy City in a variety to be found, perhaps, nowhere else. The open space at the head of it, before the Tower of David, is always thronged, as I have tried to describe, but every time you look at it, or look from it down the Street of David, the scene is different. As soon as light breaks, strings of camels, led and ridden by dark-faced Bedouins, begin to swing through the Joppa Gate to this common centre—the largest open space in the city. Women from Bethlehem, with dresses set off with blue, red, or yellow, and unveiled faces, though they have veils over their shoulders; Mahommedan women in blue gowns, which might be called by a humbler name if they were white: their eyes, the only part of their faces to be seen, looking larger than they are from the black pigment with which the edges of the eyelids are darkened; soldiers in a variety of strange uniforms; trains of donkeys with vegetables; a stray Arab, in wild desert costume, with red boots, on a horse with a red saddle—his spear, more than twelve feet long, in his hand; women in white "izars," which are coverings put on over the dress from head to foot, puffing out like balloons as the wearer advances; a half-naked dervish holding out his tin pan for alms, which he asks in the name of the All-merciful; a company of Turkish soldiers, in poverty-stricken uniforms, but strong fellows all, following their band, which plays only short, unmeaning flourishes, in the French style; Russian pilgrims; Jews of every nationality; residents from all Occidental climes;—all these, with many others, pour on through the narrow gullet of David Street, or rest for a time in the market space. You may even see a family of gipsies

encamped there, under their low black tent; for, within wide limits, everyone does as he likes in the East.

Christian Street is specially the quarter of the Christian tailors, shoemakers, and other craftsmen. Passing about 200 steps along it, we come to a very narrow street on the right, running downhill, with a frightful causeway. Turning into this, you presently come to a few steps on the left, which your donkey, if you have one, makes no difficulty in descending, and are in the open paved space before the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. This is a favourite haunt of Bethlehemite sellers of mementoes in mother-of-pearl and olive-wood, which, with other trifles, are exposed on the pavement. At festival times the throng in this spot is curious in the extreme. Men and women, children and the very old, priests and laymen from every country, repeat the spectacle and the Babel-like confusion of tongues seen and heard of old in this very city on the day of Pentecost.[1] The only entrance to the church is on the southern side, and it was shut when I reached it, but a gift to the doorkeeper having turned the key, I entered. On each side of the quadrangle are chapels, Armenian, Coptic, and Greek, the last pretending to be the place where Abraham was about to offer up Isaac. The front of the great church itself is impressive from its evident antiquity. There were originally two round-arched gateways, but that on the right is built up, as is also the upper part of the other. Above these gateways are two arches of the same size and style, deeply sunk, in which, within receding masonry, once elegantly carved, are two round-topped windows of comparatively small size.[2] On a ledge below them, where the pillars of the arches begin, some tasteful monk had put various pots of flowers, the short, rough ladder by which he had descended from the

[1] Acts ii. 8—11.

[2] About ten feet by six.

window-sill remaining where he left it. He had forgotten the poor blossoms, however, and want of water had told sadly on them. Over the two window-arches, which, with their ornamentation, reach nearly to the top of the church wall, is a square railing, enclosing the dome, which, itself, may well be regarded as worth looking at, since a dispute as to its repair was the ostensible cause of the Crimean War, and, thus, of the death of many thousands of men who never heard of the church in their lives. A window, as large as the others and on the same line, but without the imposing arch, disfigured moreover by a frame of thick iron cross-bars, stands at the right, outside the central façade; these three, about forty feet above the ground, being the only windows in front of the church, so far as is seen from the forecourt. The whole front dates from the twelfth century, when the Crusaders remodelled the building. The influence of the French art of that day is seen in the close resemblance of the ornamentation to that of some churches in Normandy. Indeed, a fine carving over one of the doors, representing Christ's entry into Jerusalem, was probably sent from France.

Just inside the door a guard of Turkish soldiers, kept there to secure peace between the rival Christian sects, jars on the feelings, as being sadly out of place amid such surroundings, however necessary. To see them lying or sitting on their mats, smoking or sipping coffee, is by no means pleasant, but after all it is better to have quiet at even this price than such riots and bloodshed as have disgraced the church at various times. Immediately before you is a stone, said to mark the spot on which our Lord's body was laid in preparation for burial, after being anointed. It is a large slab of limestone, and has at least the merit of having lain there for seven or eight hundred years, as an object of veneration to poor simple pilgrims. A few

steps to the left is the place where, as they tell us, the women stood during the anointing, and from this you pass at once, still keeping to the left, into the great round western end of the church—the model of all the circular churches of Europe—under the famous dome, which rests on eighteen pillars, with windows round the circle from which the dome springs. In the centre of this space, which is sixty-seven feet across, is the Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre, about twenty-six feet long and eighteen feet wide, a tasteless structure of reddish limestone, like marble, decorated all along the top with gilt nosegays and modern pictures, and its front ablaze with countless lamps. Inside, it is divided into two parts: the one marking, as is maintained, the spot where the angels stood at the Resurrection; the other believed to contain the sepulchre of Christ. Huge marble candlesticks, with gigantic wax candles, lighted only on high-days, stand before the Chapel of the Angels, on entering which pilgrims take off their shoes, before treading on ground so sacred. A hole on each side of the entrance shows the scene of one of the few mock-miracles still played off on human credulity, for through them the "Holy Fire," said to be sent from heaven, is given out, every Greek Easter, amidst a tumult and pressure of the outside crowd which seems to threaten numerous deaths. On the evening before the day of the Fire, every spot inside the church is densely packed with worshippers, sleeping as they stand, in weary expectation of the approaching event, or if awake, crossing their breasts, sighing aloud, and, if possible, prostrating themselves on the floor. The next forenoon, a Turkish guard, in double line, opens a passage round the sepulchre, broad enough for three men to pass through abreast, and outside this armed wall the crowd, pressed into the smallest possible space, extends from the

wall of the Rotunda to that of the Sepulchre Chapel. How so many human beings get into so small a standing-ground seems, itself, miraculous. Captain Conder's description of what follows is so vivid that I follow it.[1] "The sunlight came down from above, on the north side, where the Greeks were gathered, while on the south all was in shadow," though it was noon. "The mellow grey of the marble was lit up, and a white centre of light was formed by the caps, shirts, and veils of the native Christians. A narrow cross-lane was made at the Fire-hole on the north side," where "six herculean guardians, in jerseys, and with handkerchiefs round their heads, kept watch—the only figures plainly distinguishable among the masses."

The pilgrims, who represented every country of Eastern Christendom—Armenians, Copts, Abyssinians, Russians, Syrians, Arabs, each race by itself, in its national dress, marked by its colours as well as its style; not a few women among them, some with small babies in their arms, wailing above the hubbub of multitudinous tongues in many languages—had been standing in their places for at least ten hours, yet they showed no signs of weariness. Every face was turned to the Fire-hole; the only distraction rising when great pewter cans of water were brought round by the charity of the priests. Patient and stolid, the Russians and Armenians stood quietly, each pilgrim holding aloft in his hand, to keep them safe, a bunch of, perhaps, a dozen candles, to light at the "Fire" when it should appear. The Egyptians sat silent and motionless. The Greek Christians, mostly Syrians by birth, were restless, on the other hand, with hysterical excitement. Occasionally, one of them would struggle up to the shoulders of his neighbours, and be pushed over the heads of the crowd,

[1] *Tent Work in Palestine*, p. 175.

towards the front. Chants repeated by hundreds of voices, in perfect tune, were frequently raised by individual leaders; among them—"This is the Tomb of our Lord;" "God help the Sultan;" "O Jews, O Jews, your feast is a feast of apes;" "The Christ is given us; with His blood He bought us. We celebrate the day, and the Jews bewail;" "The seventh is the Fire and our feast, and this is the Tomb of our Lord."

Amidst all the wild confusion the patience of the soldiery was admirable, though at times there seemed danger. A lash from a thick hippopotamus-hide whip carried by the colonel, however, instantly administered where there seemed risk of disturbance, restored peace as by magic. About one o'clock the natives of Jerusalem arrived, bursting in suddenly, and surging along the narrow lane; many of them stripped to their vests and drawers. To clear the line once more, after this irruption of a second crowd, was difficult, but it was at last done, amidst loud shouts of "This is the Tomb of our Lord," repeated over and over, with wondrous rapidity. The Rotunda now contained in its little circle of sixty-seven feet diameter, from which the space occupied by the Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre must be deducted, about 2,000 persons; and the whole church, perhaps, 10,000; but at last the chant of the priests was heard in the Greek church, and the procession had begun. First came very shabby banners; the crosses, above them, bent on one side. The old Patriarch looked frightened, and shuffled along, with a dignitary on both sides carrying each a great silver globe, with holes in it, for the Fire which was to be put inside. Now rose a chorus of voices from the men, and shrill cries from the women; then all was still. Two priests stood, bare-headed, by the Fire-hole, protected by the gigantic guardians at their side.

Suddenly a great lighted torch was in their hands, passed from the Patriarch within, and with this, the two priests, surrounded by a body-guard of gigantic men, turned to the crowd; they and their guard trampling like furies through it. In a moment the thin line of soldiers was lost in the two great waves of human beings, who pressed from each side to the torch, which blazed over them, now high, now low, as it slowly made its way to the outside of the church, where a horseman sat, ready to rush off with it to Bethlehem. In its slow and troubled advance, hundreds of hands, with candles, were thrust out towards it, but none could be lighted in such a rocking commotion. Presently, however, other lighted torches were passed out of the Fire-hole, and from these the pilgrims, in eager excitement, more and more widely succeeded in kindling their tapers, but woe to the owner of the one first lit! it was snatched from him, and extinguished by a dozen others, thrust into it. Delicate women and old men fought like furies; long black turbans flew off uncoiled, and what became of the babies who can tell? A wild storm of excitement raged, as the lights spread over the whole church, like a sea of fire, extending to the galleries and choir. A stalwart negro, struggling and charging like a mad bull, ran round the church, followed by writhing arms seeking to light their tapers from his; then, as they succeeded in doing so, some might be seen bathing in the flame, and singeing their clothes in it, or dropping wax over themselves as a memorial, or even eating it. A gorgeous procession closed the whole ceremony; all the splendour of jewelled crosses, magnificent vestments, and every accessory of ecclesiastical pomp, contributing to its effect.

A religious phenomenon so strange as this yearly spectacle is nowhere else to be found. Dean Stanley's account

of it supplies some additional touches, and brings it not less vividly before us. "The Chapel of the Sepulchre,"[1] he says, "rises from a dense mass of pilgrims, who sit or stand, wedged round it; whilst round them, and beneath another equally dense mass, which goes round the walls of the church itself, a lane is formed by two lines, or rather two circles, of Turkish soldiers, stationed to keep order. . . . . About noon this circular lane is suddenly broken through by a tangled group, rushing violently round, till they are caught by one of the Turkish soldiers. It seems to be the belief of the Arab Greeks that unless they run round the sepulchre a certain number of times, the Fire will not come. Possibly, also, there is some strange reminiscence of the funeral games and races round the tomb of an ancient chief. Accordingly, the night before, and from this time forward, for two hours, a succession of gambols takes place, which an Englishman can only compare to a mixture of prisoner's base, football, and leapfrog, round and round the Holy Sepulchre. First, he sees these tangled masses of twenty, thirty, fifty men, starting in a run, catching hold of each other, lifting one of themselves on their shoulders, sometimes on their heads, and rushing on with him till he leaps off, and some one else succeeds; some of them dressed in sheepskins, some almost naked; one usually preceding the rest, as a fugleman, clapping his hands, to which they respond in like manner, adding also wild howls, of which the chief burden is, 'This is the Tomb of Jesus Christ—God save the Sultan;' 'Jesus Christ has redeemed us.' What begins in the lesser groups, soon grows in magnitude and extent, till, at last, the whole of the circle between the troops is continuously occupied by a race, a whirl, a torrent, of these wild figures, wheeling round the sepulchre. Gradually the frenzy

[1] *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 460.

subsides or is checked; the course is cleared, and out of the Greek Church, on the east of the Rotunda, a long procession with embroidered banners, supplying in their ritual the want of images, begins to defile round the sepulchre.

"From this moment the excitement, which has before been confined to the runners and dancers, becomes universal. Hedged in by the soldiers, the two huge masses of pilgrims still remain in their places, all joining, however, in a wild succession of yells, through which are caught, from time to time, strangely, almost affectingly mingled, the chants of the procession. Thrice the procession paces round; at the third time, the two lines of Turkish soldiers join and fall in behind. One great movement sways the multitude from side to side. The crisis of the day is now approaching. The presence of the Turks is believed to prevent the descent of the Fire, and at this point they are driven, or consent to be driven, out of the church. In a moment, the confusion, as of a battle and a victory, pervades the church. In every direction the raging mob bursts in upon the troops, who pour out of the church at the south-east corner—the procession is broken through, the banners stagger and waver. They stagger, and waver, and fall, amidst the flight of priests, bishops, and standard-bearers, hither and thither, before the tremendous rush. In one small but compact band, the Bishop, who represents the Patriarch, is hurried to the Chapel of the Sepulchre, and the door is closed behind him. The whole church is now one heaving sea of heads, resounding with an uproar which can be compared to nothing less than that of the Guildhall of London, at a nomination for the City. One vacant space alone is left: a narrow lane from the aperture on the north side of the chapel, to the wall of the church. By the aperture itself stands a priest, to catch the Fire; on each side of the lane,

as far as the eye can reach, hundreds of bare arms are stretched out like the branches of a leafless forest—like the branches of a forest quivering in some violent tempest.

"In earlier and bolder times the expectation of the Divine Presence was, at this juncture, raised to a still higher pitch by the appearance of a dove, hovering above the cupola of the chapel, to indicate the visible descent of the Holy Ghost. This has now been discontinued, but the belief still continues. Silent—awfully silent—in the midst of this frantic uproar, stands the Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre. At last the moment comes. A bright flame, as of burning wood, appears within the hole, kindled by the Bishop within—but, as every pilgrim believes, the light of the descent of God Himself upon the Holy Tomb. Any distinct feature or incident is lost in the universal whirl of excitement which envelops the church, as, slowly, gradually, the fire spreads from hand to hand, from taper to taper, through that vast multitude—till, at last, the whole edifice, from gallery to gallery, and through the area below, is one wide blaze of thousands of burning candles. . . . . It is now that a mounted horseman, stationed at the gates of the church, gallops off with a lighted taper, to communicate the Sacred Fire to the lamps of the Greek Church in the convent at Bethlehem. It is now that the great rush, to escape from the rolling smoke and the suffocating heat, and to carry the lighted tapers into the streets and houses of Jerusalem, through the one entrance to the church, leads at times to the violent pressure which, in 1834, cost the lives of hundreds. For a short time, the pilgrims run to and fro, rubbing their faces and breasts against the fire, to attest its supposed harmlessness. But the wild enthusiasm terminates from the moment that the fire is communicated. Such is the Greek Easter."

But we must return to the chapel. In the centre, cased in marble, stands what is called a piece of the stone rolled away by the angels; and at the western end, entered by a low doorway, is the reputed tomb-chamber of our Lord, a very small spot, for it is only six feet wide, a few inches longer, and very low. It seems to belie its claim to be a burial-place by the glittering marble with which it is cased, but it is solemnly beautiful in the soft light of forty-three gold and silver lamps, hung from chains and shining through red, yellow, and green glass; the colours marking the sects to which the lamps belong: thirteen each for Franciscans, Greeks, and Armenians, and four for the Copts. The tomb itself is a raised table, two feet high, three feet wide, and over six feet long, the top of it serving as an altar, over which the darkness is only relieved by the dim lamps. Due east from the Rotunda is the Greek nave, closed, at the far end, by a magnificent screen. A short column in the floor, which is otherwise unoccupied, marks what was anciently believed to be "the centre of the world;" for has not Ezekiel said, "This is Jerusalem; I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries, that are round about her"?[1] Garlands of lamps, gilded thrones for the Bishop and Patriarch, and the lofty screen, towering up to the roof, carved with figures in low relief, row above row; the side walls set off with panels, in which dark pictures are framed; huge marble candlesticks, two of them eight feet high,—all this, seen in the rich light of purple and other coloured lamps, makes up an effect which is very imposing.

At the western extremity of the so-called sepulchre, but attached to it from the outside, is a little wooden chapel, the only part of the church allotted to the poor Copts; and further west, but parted from the sepulchre

[1] Ezek. v. 5.

itself, is the still poorer chapel of the still poorer Syrians, happy in their poverty, however, from its having probably been the means of saving from marble and decoration the so-called tombs of Joseph and Nicodemus, which lie in their precincts, and in which rests the chief evidence of the genuineness of the whole site,[1] for it is certain that they, at least, are natural caves in the rock.

It would be idle to dwell on the multitudinous sacred places gathered by monkish ingenuity under the one roof of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and which must weary the patience of the pilgrims, however fervent. Two spots only deserve special notice. On the east of the whole building, from behind the Greek choir, a staircase of twenty-nine steps leads down to the Chapel of St. Helena, the mother of the Emperor Constantine, who in the year A.D. 326, at the age of nearly eighty, visited Palestine, and caused churches to be erected at Bethlehem, where Christ was born, and on the Mount of Olives, from some part of which He ascended to heaven. Nothing is said till the century after her death about her discovering the Holy Sepulchre, or building a church on the spot, but legend and pious fraud had by that time created the story of the "Invention (or Finding) of the Cross." In a simpler form, the chapel has been ascribed to Constantine himself, who, it is affirmed by a contemporary,[2] caused the earth under which the enemies of Christianity were said to have buried the Holy Sepulchre to be removed, and built a church over it. Robinson, who gives a full quotation of the authorities on the subject,[3] thinks there is hardly any fact of history better accredited than the alleged discovery of what is called the true cross. Thus, Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem from A.D. 348 onwards, only about

[1] *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 460. [2] Eusebius, *Vit. Const.*, iii. 25—40.
[3] *Bib. Researches*, ii. 12—16.

twenty years after the event, frequently speaks of his preaching in the church raised by Constantine to commemorate it, and expressly mentions the finding of the cross, under that emperor, and its existence in his own day. Jerome also, in A.D. 385, relates that in Jerusalem, Paula, his disciple, not only performed her devotions in the Holy Sepulchre, but prostrated herself before the cross in adoration. But, though a cross seems to have really existed, and is said to have been found underground, how easy would deception have been in such a case, and how improbable that any cross should have lain buried for 300 years! The upright beam of such instruments of death, moreover, was a fixture on which fresh cross-pieces were nailed for each sufferer, so that identification of a whole cross as that on which Christ died seems beyond possibility. Besides, the crucifixion is expressly said to have taken place outside the city,[1] and this the present site never was. The Chapel of St. Helena, therefore, and the other holy places connected with it, however venerable, are in no degree vouchers for the amazing incidents associated with them.

It is very striking to come upon a vaulted church, with high arches, carved pillars, glittering strings of lamps, exquisite screens, and large sacred pillars, so far underground. But there is still another below it. Thirteen steps more lead to the "Chapel of the Finding of the Cross," which is either a cavern in the rock artificially enlarged, or an ancient cistern, about twenty-four feet long, nearly as wide, and sixteen feet high, paved with stone. It contains an altar, and a large portrait of the Empress Helena, but is so dark that candles must be lighted to see either. This was the place, says tradition, where the three crosses of Calvary were found; the one on

[1] John xix. 17, 20; Mark xv. 20; Heb. xiii. 12, 13.

which our Saviour died being discovered by taking the three to the bedside of a noble lady afflicted with incurable illness, which resisted the touch of two, but left her at once when the third was brought near.

Remounting the steps, you are led by a stair from the Greek choir to what is said to be Golgotha, or Mount Calvary, now consecrated by three chapels of different sects, the floor being fourteen and a half feet above that of the church below. An opening, faced with silver, shows the spot where the cross is said to have been sunk in the rock, and less than five feet from it is a long brass open-work slide, over a cleft in the rock which is about six inches deep, but is supposed by the pilgrims to reach to the centre of the earth. This is said to mark the rending of the rocks at the Crucifixion. But there is an air of unreality over the whole scene, with its gorgeous decorations of lamps, mosaics, pictures, and gilding; nor could I feel more than the gratification of my curiosity in the midst of such a monstrous aggregation of wonders. Faith evaporates when it finds so many demands made upon it—when it is assured that within a few yards of each other are the scene of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac; that of the appearance of Christ to Mary Magdalene; the stone of anointing; the spot where the woman stood at the solemn preparation for the tomb; the place where the angels stood at the Resurrection; the very tomb of our Lord; the tombs of Joseph and Nicodemus; the column to which Christ was bound when He was scourged; His prison; the scene of the parting of the raiment; of the crowning with thorns; of the actual crucifixion; of the rending of the rocks; of the finding of the true cross; of the burial-place of Adam, under the spot where the cross afterwards rose; the tree in which the *goat* offered instead of Isaac was caught, and much else.

CHAPTER XXII.

JERUSALEM—(*Continued.*)

Close to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre are the ruins of the Muristan or Hospice of the Knights of St. John—"muristan" being the Arabic word for a hospital, to which part of the great pile of buildings that once covered the site was devoted. A few paces lead one to a fine old gateway, over which is the Prussian eagle, half of the site having been given to Prussia, in 1869. The whole space, once filled up with courts, halls, chambers, a church, and a hospital, is over 500 feet square, and now lies, for the most part, in desolation. The arch by which you enter is semicircular, and was adorned 700 years ago with a series of figures illustrating the months —men pruning, sowing, reaping, threshing, and the like; but the carvings are now very much mutilated. Within, a large space has been cleared of rubbish and abomination by the German Government, the ruins being left to tell their story with silent eloquence. Already, in A.D. 1048, a church had been built in Jerusalem by Italian merchants, and a hospital attached to it, close to a chapel consecrated to John, at that time Patriarch of Alexandria. From him, the monks, who had undertaken to nurse and care for sick and poor pilgrims, took the name of Johnites, or Brethren of the Hospital. Raised to the dignity of a separate Order in A.D. 1113, they received great possessions from Godfrey de Bouillon

and others. A little later in the twelfth century they were further changed into an Order of clerical monks, some of whom were set apart for military service, others for spiritual service, as chaplains, and the rest as Serving Brothers, to care for the sick, and escort pilgrims to the holy places. Gradually extending itself, the Order gained vast possessions in nearly every part of Christendom, and had a corresponding influence, which secured for it the hearty support of the Papacy, and especial privileges. Their splendid history in Palestine, Cyprus, Rhodes, and Malta lies outside my limits; but it is pleasant to recall their humbler services to successive generations of poor and sick pilgrims in the once busy halls and chambers of the Muristan. Hundreds of these forlorn wanderers could be received into the great hospital and hospice at once, and who can doubt the devotion on one side, and the gratitude on the other, that must, a thousand times, have made these now ruined walls sacred? *He* remembers, with whom no good deed done in His name, no tear ever shed in lowly thanksgiving, is ever overlooked! A hundred and twenty-four stone pillars once supported the arched halls of the palace, but now in the very midst of the city there are only, where the ruins have not been cleared, heaps of rubbish, patches of flowering field-beans, straggling arms of the prickly pear, rising forbiddingly aloft, and here and there a fig-tree. Outside the gate, there is nothing offensive, as there used to be, but simple stalls, where parti-coloured glass rings from Hebron, and other trifles, are sold. The German Government have made the space given to them within, a centre for the German Protestants of Jerusalem; erecting on it a church for them, and other buildings.

The bazaars of the city, which are probably much the same as the business part of Jerusalem was in the days of

Christ, stretch along the east side of the Muristan, southwards, to David Street. They consist of three arched lanes, lighted only by holes in the roof, and hence very dark, even at noon. The western one is the flesh-market, but displays only parts of sheep and goats, for very few oxen or calves are used for food. In the other lanes, tradesmen of different kinds—fruiterers, oil, grain, and leather sellers—sit, cross-legged, in dark holes in the arched sides, or in front of these, waiting for business. Here you see a row of shoemakers, yonder a range of pipe-stem borers. More than one of the tradesmen, in the intervals of business, sits at the mouth of his den with the Koran open before him, his left hand holding paper on which to write his comments, his right holding the pen, dipped from time to time in the brass "inkhorn" stuck in his girdle.[1] At a recess in the side, on which light falls, sits a bearded old man, duly turbaned, with flowing robes, a broad sash round his waist inside his light "abba," his slippers on the ground before him, his feet bent up beneath him, his long pipe resting against the bench at his side, it being impossible that he should use it for the moment, as he is busy writing a letter for a woman who stands veiled, behind, giving him instructions what to say. He is a professional letter-writer: a class of which one may see representatives in any Oriental city, just as they could be seen in olden times in English towns, before education was so widely spread as it is now. The paper is held in the left hand, not laid on a desk, and the scribe writes from the right hand to the left, with a piece of reed, pointed like a pen, but without a split: the same instrument, apparently, as was used in Christ's day, for in the New Testament a pen is called *kalamos*, a reed, and its name is still, in Arabic, *kalem*, which has the same meaning.

[1] Ezek. ix. 2, 3, 11.

The pens and ink are held in a brass case, which is thrust into the girdle when not in use; the hollow shaft containing the pens, and a small brass box which rises on one side at the end, the ink, poured into cotton wadding or on palm threads, to keep it from spilling. A few hints given him are enough: off he goes, with all manner of Oriental salaams and compliments, setting forth, in the fashionable, high-flown style natural to the East, what the poor girl wishes to say.

There are two words in the Old Testament for a pen; one of these occurs only twice, and is translated differently each time. Aaron is said to have "fashioned" the golden calf with "a graving tool,"[1] but the same word is used by Isaiah for a pen—"Take thee a great tablet and write upon it with the pen of a man."[2] This shows that *heret*, at least, meant a metal stylus, or sharp-pointed instrument, with which surfaces like that of wax, spread on tablets, or even the surface of metal plates, might be marked with written characters. The other word, *ēt*, occurs four times, and in two of these the implement is said to be of iron,[3] so that, so far as the Old Testament indicates, reed pens had not come into use till its books had all been written. The word translated "inkhorn" is found only in Ezekiel,[4] and owes its English rendering to our ancestors having horns for ink, the Hebrew word meaning simply a round vessel or cup, large or small, and, as we see in the case of the prophet, worn, at least sometimes, in the girdle. It may, therefore, have been similar to the "inkhorns" at present universal in the East.

Writing was known in Palestine long before the invasion of the Hebrews, as we see in the name of Kirjath Sepher—"Book Town"[5]—but was brought by them from

[1] Ex. xxxii. 4. [2] Isa. viii. 1. [3] Job xix. 24; Jer. xvii. 1.
[4] Ezek. ix. 2, 3, 11. [5] Josh. xv. 15.

Egypt, for, while there, they had *shoterim* among them: the class known in our Bible as "scribes" or "writers."[1] It is not surprising, therefore, to read of Moses "writing in the book,"[2] or that the priests could write,[3] or that the people generally could do so, more or less. They were to write parts of the law on their door-posts and gates;[4] a husband, in divorcing his wife, was to "write her a bill, or book, of divorcement,"[5] and the king was to write out the Book of the Law.[6] Letters were written by Jezebel, in the name of Ahab, and sealed with his seal; by Jehu, Hezekiah, Rabshakeh, and many others.

The seal is a very important matter, as the name of the wearer is engraved on it, to be affixed by him to all letters and documents. It is, therefore, constantly carried on the person, and when trusted to another, virtually empowers him to act in its owner's place. Even Judah had his signet,[7] which he perhaps wore as the bridegroom in Canticles wore his, on the breast, suspended by a string.[8] The seal is used in the East in ways peculiar to those regions—to seal up doors, gates, fountains, and tombs. The entrance to the den of lions was sealed upon Daniel with the signet of the king and of his lords; the bride in Canticles, as we already know, is compared for her purity to a fountain sealed; and we all remember how the guard made the sepulchre of our Lord "sure, sealing the stone."[9] A letter *must* be sealed, if an insult be not actually intended, so that when Sanballat sent his servant to Nehemiah with an open letter in his

[1] Ex. v. 6. Translated wrongly "officers." The R.V., as in so many other cases, retains this mistranslation.

[2] Ex. xvii. 14; xxiv. 4. [3] Num. v. 23. [4] Deut. vi. 9; xi. 20.

[5] Deut. xxiv. 1, 3. [6] Deut. xvii. 18. [7] Gen. xxxviii. 18.

[8] Cant viii. 6. [9] Cant. iv. 12; Dan. vi. 17; Matt. xxvii. 66.

hand, he offered the great man a deliberate affront.[1] The ink now used is made of gum, lampblack, and water, and is said never to fade. Small horns are still used in some parts of Egypt to hold it. In sealing a letter or document, a little ink is rubbed over the face of the seal, a spot damped on the paper, and the seal pressed down; but when doors or the like are spoken of as sealed, it was done by impressing the seal on pieces of clay[2] or other substances. When Pharaoh "took off his ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand,"[3] it was the sign of his appointment to the Viziership of Egypt, just as a similar act in Turkey, now, instals a dignitary as Grand Vizier of the empire.

The display in the stalls of Jerusalem, for they hardly deserve to be called by a name so respectable as "shops," varies of course with the season. In the market before the citadel, cauliflowers, and vegetables generally, are the main features in March, but as the year advances, cucumbers, tomatoes, grapes, figs, prickly pears, pomegranates, from the neighbourhood, and oranges, lemons, and melons from Joppa and the plain of Sharon, are abundant. Roses are so plentiful in the early summer that they are sold by weight for conserves and attar of roses, and every window and table has its bunch of them. In the streets and bazaars, during the busy part of the day, all is confusion on the horrible causeway, and image-like stolidity on the part of many of the sellers. The butchers, however, like members of the trade elsewhere, shout out their invitations to come and buy, and the fruit-sellers in their quarter rival or even outdo them by very doubtful assurances that they are parting with their stock for nothing! Women from Bethany or Siloam, in long blue cotton gowns, or rather sacks, loosely fitting the

[1] Neh. vi. 5 [2] Job xxxviii. 14. [3] Gen. xli. 42.

body, without any attempt at a waist, sit here and there on the side of the street, at any vacant spot, selling eggs, olives, cucumbers, tomatoes, onions, and other rural produce. Bright-coloured kerchiefs tied round the head distinguish them from their sisters of Bethlehem, who have white veils over their shoulders and bright parti-coloured dresses, and are seen here and there trying their best to turn the growth of the garden or orchard into coin. Young lads wander about offering for sale flat round "scones" and sour milk. The grocer sits in his primitive stall, behind baskets of raisins, dates, sugar, and other wares, pipe in mouth. No such tumble-down establishment could be found in the worst lane of the slums of London. The two half-doors—hanging awry—which close it at night, would disgrace a barn; the lock is a wooden affair, of huge size; a rough beam set in the wall, perhaps seven feet from the ground, supports the house overhead, while some short poles resting on it bear up a narrow coping of slabs, old and broken, to keep off, in some measure, the sun and rain. The doors, when closed, do not fit against this beam by a good many inches; and there is the same roughness inside. Rafters, coarse, unpainted, twisted, run across; a few shelves cling, as they best can, to the walls; hooks here and there, or nails, bear up part of the stock, but the whole is a picture of utter untidiness and poverty which would ruin the humblest shop in any English village. A cobbler's shop, yonder, next to an old arch, is simply the remains of a house long since fallen down, except its ground arch, which is too low for a tall man to stand in it. The prickly pear is shooting out its great deformed hands overhead; grass and weeds cover the tumbling wall. Beams, never planed but only rough-hewn, no one could tell how long ago, form the doorpost, sill, and lintel, against which a wooden gate, that

looks as if it were never intended to be moved, is dragged after dark. A low butcher's block serves as anvil on which to beat the sole-leather; over the cave-mouth a narrow shelf holds a row of bright red and yellow slippers with turned-up toes, and there are two other and shorter shelves with a similar display. The master is at work on one side, and his starved servant on the other, close to the entrance, for there is no light except from the street. The slippers of the two lie outside, close to them, and a jar of water rests near, from which they can drink when they wish. A few old, short boards jut out a foot or two over the shelf of slippers above, to give a trifle of shade. There is no paint; no one in the East thinks of such a thing; indeed, such dog-holes as most shops are defy the house-painter. Arabs and peasants, on low rush stools, sit in the open air, before a Mahommedan café, engrossed in a game like chess or draughts, played on a low chequered table; the stock of the establishment consisting of the table, a small fire to light the pipes and prepare coffee, some coffee-cups, water-pipes, and a venerable collection of red clay pipe-heads with long wooden stems. Grave men sit silently hour after hour before such a house of entertainment, amusing themselves with an occasional whiff of the pipe, or a sip of coffee. But all the shops are not so poor as the cobbler's, though wretched enough to Western eyes. David Street, with its dreadful causeway, can boast of the goods of Constantinople, Damascus, Manchester, and Aleppo, but only in small quantities and at fabulous prices. Towards the Jewish quarter, most of the tradesmen are shoemakers, tinsmiths, and tailors, all of them working in dark arches or cupboards, very strange to see. Only in Christian Street, and towards the top of David Street, can some watery reflections of Western ideas as to shopkeeping be seen.

To walk through the sloping, roughly-paved, narrow streets of the modern Jerusalem, seemed, in the unchanging East, to bring back again those of the old Bible city. One could notice the characteristics of rich and poor, old and young, townspeople and country folks, of both sexes, as they streamed in many-coloured confusion through the bazaars and the lane-like streets. The well-to-do townspeople delight to wear as great a variety of clothes as they can afford, and as costly as their purse allows. Besides their under-linen and several light jackets and vests, they have two robes reaching the ankles, one of cloth, the other of cotton or silk. A costly girdle holds the inner long robe together, and in it merchants always stick the brass or silver pen and ink case.[1] A great signet ring is indispensable, as it was already in the days of Judah.[2] Many also carry a bunch of flowers, with which to occupy their idle fingers when they sit down or loiter about. The head is covered with a red or white cap, round which a long cotton cloth is wound, forming the whole into a turban.

The peasant is clad much more simply. Over his shirt he draws only an "abba" of camels'- or goats'-hair cloth, with sleeves or without, striped white and brown, or white and black. It was, one may think, just such a coat which Christ referred to when He told the Apostles not to carry a second.[3] Many peasants have not even an abba, but content themselves with the blue shirt, reaching their calves, and this they gird round them with a leather strap, or a sash, as the fishermen did in the time of St. Peter.[4] If he has any money, the peasant carries it in the lining of his girdle; and hence the command to the Apostles, who were to go forth penniless, that they were

[1] Ezek. ix. 2.
[2] See *ante*, p. 490.
[3] Matt. x. 10.
[4] John xxi. 7.

to take no money in their *girdles*.[1] Elijah and John the Baptist wore leathern girdles; Jeremiah had one of linen.[2] It is thus still with the country people, but the townsfolk indulge themselves in costly sashes. The water-carriers, who bend under their huge goat-skin bags of the precious fluid, selling it to any customers in the streets whom they may attract by their cry or by the ringing of a small bell, or taking it to houses, are the most meanly clad of any citizens. A shirt, reaching to the knees, is their only garment. Their calling, and that of the hewers of wood, is still the humblest in the community, just as in the days when Moses addressed Israel before his death, for he puts the heads of the tribes at the top, and the hewers of wood and drawers of water at the bottom, of his enumeration of classes; setting even the foreigner who might be in their midst above these latter.[3] The Gibeonites, whom Joshua was compelled by his oath to spare, were thus doomed to the hardest fate, next to death, that could be assigned them, when sentenced to perpetual slavery, with the special task of hewing wood and drawing water for the community.[4] It is in allusion to water being borne about in skins like those of to-day that the Psalmist in his affliction prays God to "put his tears into His bottle,"[5] that they might not run away unmarked.

Female dress is strangely like that of the men, but while the poor peasant-woman or girl has often only a long blue shirt, without a girdle, her sisters of the town, where they are able to do so, draw a great veil over various longer and shorter garments, which covers them before and behind, from head to foot, so that they are entirely concealed. It is this which puffs out, balloon-like, as I have

[1] Mark vi. 8 (Greek).
[2] 2 Kings i. 8; Matt. iii. 4; Jer. xiii. 1.
[3] Deut. xxix. 10, 11.
[4] Josh. ix. 23, 27.
[5] Ps. lvi. 8.

already noticed, when they pass by; but it is not probable that Hebrew women wore such a thing, as they seem to have appeared in public, both before and after marriage, with their faces exposed. Hence, the Egyptians could see the beauty of Sarah, and Eliezer noticed that of Rebekah, while Eli saw the lips of Hannah moving in silent prayer.[1] The veil, in fact, seems to have been worn only as an occasional ornament, as when the loved one, in Canticles, is said to have behind her veil eyes like dove's eyes, and temples delicate in tint as the pomegranate;[2] or by betrothed maidens before their future husbands, as Rebekah took a veil and covered herself before Isaac met her;[3] or when concealment of the features was specially desired for questionable ends.[4]

A natural and earnest wish of a poor girl of Jerusalem is to be able to hang a line of coins along her brow and down her cheeks, as is common elsewhere, for she sees rich women round her with a great display of such adornment on their hair, and notices that even the children of the wealthy have numbers of small gold coins tied to the numerous plaits which hang down their shoulders; indeed, some children have them tied round their ankles also. The double veil, falling both before and behind, is not so frequent as in Egypt, but it would appear to have been more common among Jewish women anciently, at least in worship, if we may judge from the command of St. Paul that the women should never appear in the congregation at Corinth without having their heads covered.[5] Among the poorer classes in Jerusalem, as elsewhere in Palestine, both men and women tattoo themselves. The women darken their eyelids, to brighten the eyes and

[1] Gen. xii. 14; xxiv. 16; xxix. 10; 1 Sam. i. 12.
[2] Cant. iv. 1, 3; vi. 7 (Heb.).
[3] Gen. xxiv. 65.
[4] Gen. xxxviii. 14.
[5] 1 Cor. xi. 5.

make them seem larger, and often puncture their arms fancifully, as a substitute for arm-rings. Among the peasant-women the chin and cheeks, also, are often seen with blue punctured marks, and the nails are very generally dyed red.

From the bazaars, the street running almost directly north brought me to the Damascus Gate: the entrance to the city from Samaria and all the northern country. The slope of the ground here shows very clearly the line dividing the eastern from the western hill—Moriah from Zion—a depression, once known as the Cheese-makers' Valley, still running towards the ancient Temple enclosure. Originally this was a deep gully, opening into the Valley of Jehoshaphat at its junction with that of the Sons of Hinnom, on the south-east corner of the city; but it is now well-nigh filled up with the rubbish of many centuries, so that it can only be detected near the Damascus Gate. No more thoroughly Oriental scene can be imagined than that offered when, standing at this gate, you look at the two streets which branch off from it, south-west and south-east. The houses are very old, with a thick growth of wall-vegetation wherever it can get a footing; no one thinking of repairs, or even of preventing decay, in whatever form it may come. Flat roofs one cannot see, but only the low domes covering the tops of arches; the house-corners, the few pieces of sloping roof, the ledges jutting out here and there, the awnings of mats stretched on epileptic poles, and projecting over the street, the woodwork filling in the round of arches used as cafés or for business, and even the time-worn stones of the buildings as a whole, form a picture of dilapidation which must be seen to be realised.

A nondescript building of one storey faces you, on the left hand; the dome of the arch which constitutes the

structure rising through the flat roof. Another house of two storeys joins it on the right, the upper storey rising like a piece of a tower, slanting inwards on all sides, with a parapet on the top, through which a row of triangles of clay pipes supply ornament and peep-holes. One very small window in the tower is the only opening for light, except two low arches, the semicircles of which are filled up with rough old woodwork. The causeway is, of course, antediluvian. Figures, in all kinds of strange dress, sit on low rush stools in the street along the front of this building, some of them enjoying the delicacies of a street-cook, whose brazier is alight to provide whatever in his art any customer may demand. Some sit cross-legged on the stones; others literally on nothing, their feet supporting them without their body touching the ground: a feat which no Occidental could possibly perform for more than a few minutes together. Camels stalk leisurely towards the Gate; a man on the hump of the foremost, with his feet out towards its neck. Long-muzzled yellow street-dogs lie about, or prowl after scraps. On the right a two-leaved door, which would disfigure a respectable barn, hangs open, askew, and reveals the treasures of some shopkeeper; grave personages sit along the wall beside deep baskets of fruit; a turbaned figure passes with his worldly all, in the shape of some sweetmeats, on a tray, seeking to decrease his stock by profitable sale. A wretched arch admits to the street beyond, but into this, with its stream of passengers, I did not enter. At the head of the street on the left hand, leading to the south-east, a group of Bedouins were enjoying their pipes in the open air, and of course there were idlers about; but the rest of the street was almost deserted. It leads to the Austrian Hospice, a well-built modern Home for Pilgrims, where, for a gratuity of five francs a day, one may forget,

in the midst of Western comfort, that he is in the East. From this point you enter a street famous in later monkish tradition as the Via Dolorosa—the way by which our Saviour went from the judgment-seat of Pilate to His crucifixion. That no reliance can be placed on this is, however, clear from the self-evident fact that the route taken must depend on the situation of Pilate's Hall, of which nothing is known, though it seems natural that it should have been on the high ground of Zion, the site of the palace of Herod, rather than in the confined and sordid lanes of the city. We may, moreover, feel confident that the Jerusalem of Christ's day perished, for the most part, in the siege of Titus, so that even the lines of the ancient streets, traced over the deep beds of rubbish left by the Romans, must be very different, in many cases, from those of the earlier city.

This, however, has in no degree fettered monkish invention, for there are fourteen stations for prayer in the Via Dolorosa, at which different incidents in the story of the Gospels are said to have taken place. The street rises gently to an arch apparently of the time of Hadrian, and originally an arch of triumph, now said to mark the spot where Pilate, pointing to the bruised and stricken Saviour, said, "Behold the Man!"[1] There were once, it would seem, two side arches, with a larger one in the middle, but only the central one, and that on one side, are now standing; the other, and even part of the centre span, being built into the Church of the Sisters of Zion. Before reaching this you pass the place at which Simon of Cyrene is said to have taken up the cross, and that where Christ fell under its weight. The house where Lazarus of Bethany dwelt after being raised from the dead, and the mansion of Dives, are also shown.

[1] John xix. 5.

Pilate's Judgment-hall is affirmed to be identical with the mansion of the Pasha of Jerusalem, at the Turkish barracks on the north-west corner of the Temple enclosure. This building is said to be the old tower called Antonia by the Romans, and used by them to control the worshippers at the Passover season; but the main structure is comparatively modern, though some old stones remain at the gateway. On these rises, to a height of about forty feet, a square tower of slight dimensions, from which an archway twelve or fourteen feet high bends over the street. A mass of old wall surmounts this and fills in what was once a second lofty arch, surmounted by a great window, only the bottom of which now remains. A huge growth of prickly pear leans over the broken street-wall below, the side of the tower is partly fallen, and wild vegetation flourishes wherever it has been able to get a foothold. Passing on a short distance, we come to a pool on the right, which claims to be that of Bethesda,[1] where Christ healed the blind man. This huge basin, in great part excavated in the living rock, is 360 feet long, 126 feet wide, and eighty feet deep; but it is so filled with a mass of rubbish, rising thirty-five feet above a great part of the bottom, that it is difficult to realise the full size or depth. I got access to the surface through a hole in a wall, but had to take the greatest care to avoid the pollutions which covered nearly every step of my way through weeds and bushes to the edge. Such a work speaks for the grand ideas of its originator, who is unknown, but was perhaps one of the old Jewish kings. The north wall of the Temple enclosure rises high over the pool to the south, and deepens the impression of its hugeness. Steps, very irregular, lead down to the bottom at the west end, and the

[1] John v. 2. A smaller pool, once called "Struthion," north-west of Bethesda, but now built over, is thought by some to have been Bethesda.

pressure of the water is provided against at the east end, where the hill rapidly descends, by a dam forty-five feet thick, which serves also as part of the city wall. Whether this was really Bethesda has been warmly disputed, Sir Charles Warren thinking that two pools, once near the Church of St. Anne, close by, were "the Twin Pools" which were believed in the early Christian centuries to be Bethesda,[1] while Captain Conder says that the present pool is not clearly mentioned before the tenth century, and may have been built by the Romans or early Arabs.[2] The wonderful perfection of the cement of lime and broken pottery over the bottom, which needed to be blasted before it could be broken up, and the immense care with which the stone under it had been prepared, certainly seem to point to an origin in the palmy days of Israel, when vast works could be carried out at leisure.

About seventy-five yards north of this great pool is a fine specimen of Crusading architecture—the triple-naved pure Gothic Church of St. Anne, formerly used as a mosque, but after many centuries given back to the Christians, as a gift of the Sultan to Napoleon III., at the close of the Crimean War. A huge cistern excavated in the rock below it and carefully cemented is actually claimed to have been the home of St. Anne, the mother of the Virgin Mary.

West of the great pool, three gates open into the Temple enclosure, now the Harem esh Sherif, but entrance by these is strictly prohibited to any save Mahommedans. Indeed, it is only a few years since that unbelievers were permitted to enter at all, and many a rash intruder, ignorant of the danger, has in former days been killed for daring to intrude on such holy ground. The bitter fanaticism of the past has, however, yielded so far that a

[1] *Recovery of Jerusalem*, p. 198. [2] *Tent Work in Palestine*, p. 185.

fee, paid through one of the consulates, enables strangers to enter, if duly attended by one of the richly-bedizened "cavasses," or servants of such an office. I was thus enabled, in company with a party of Americans, to go over the mysterious space, which, indeed, has sights one cannot well forget. The great Silseleh Gate, at the foot of David Street and thus almost in the centre of the western side of the enclosure, admits you by two or three steps upwards to the sacred precincts, which offer in their wide open space of thirty-five acres, the circumference nearly equal to a mile,[1] a delightful relief, after toiling through the narrow and filthy streets. Lying about 2,420 feet above the Mediterranean, this spot is comparatively cool, even in summer. The surface was once a rough hill sloping or swelling irregularly, but a vast level platform has been formed, originally under Solomon, by cutting away the rock in some places, raising huge arched vaults at others, and elsewhere by filling up the hollows with rubbish and stones.

Near the north-west corner the natural rock appears on the surface, or is only slightly covered, but it was originally much higher. The whole hill, however, has been cut away at this part, except a mass at the angle of the wall, rising with a perpendicular face, north and south, forty feet above the platform. On this, it seems certain, the Roman Fort Antonia was built, for Josephus speaks of it as standing at this corner on a rock fifty cubits high.[2] This platform is, moreover, separated from the north-eastern hill by a deep trench, fifty yards broad, now occupied in part by "the Pool of Bethesda," and this, also, agrees with what the Jewish historian says of

[1] On the map in *The Recovery of Jerusalem*, the entire space is about 4,800 feet round, about 500 feet less than a mile.

[2] Jos. *Bell. Jud.*, v. 5, 8.

Antonia. The north-east corner has been "made" by filling up a steep slope with earth and stones, but the chief triumph of architecture was seen on the south, where the wall rose from the valley to a height almost equal to that of the tallest of our church-spires, while above this, in the days of Herod's Temple, rose the royal porch, a triple cloister, higher and longer than York Cathedral, when seen from the valley outside; the whole, when fresh, glittering with a marble-like whiteness. The vast space thus obtained within was utilised in many ways.

Level as is the surface thus secured by almost incredible labour, it covers wonders unsuspected, for the ground is perfectly honeycombed with cisterns hewn in the rock; the largest being south of the central height. All appear to have been connected together by rock-cut channels, though their size was so great in some cases that, as a whole, they could probably store more than 10,000,000 gallons of water; one cistern—known as the Great Sea—holding no less than 2,000,000 gallons. The supply for this vast system of reservoirs seems to have been obtained from springs, wells, rain, and aqueducts at a distance. It is, indeed, a question whether any natural springs existed in or near Jerusalem, except the Fountain of the Virgin in the Kedron valley.

Nearly in the centre of the great open area is a raised platform of marble, about sixteen feet high, reached by broad steps, and on this stands the so-called Mosque of Omar, built over the naked top of Mount Moriah, whence Mahomet is fabled to have ascended to heaven. Dated inscriptions from the Koran represent that it was built between the years A.D. 688 and A.D. 693, under the reign of the Caliph Abd-el-Melek. It has eight sides, each sixty-six feet in length, so that it is over 500 feet in circumference. Inside, it is 152 feet across. A screen,

divided by piers and columns of great beauty, follows the lines of the eight sides, at a distance of thirteen feet from them, and, then, within this, at a further distance of thirty feet, is a second screen, round the sacred top of the mountain, relieved in the same way with pillars, which support aloft the beautiful dome, sixty-six feet wide at its base. Outside, the height of the wall is thirty-six feet, and it is pierced below by four doors. For sixteen feet from the platform it is cased in different-coloured marbles, but at that height there is an exquisite series of round arches, seven on each face, two-thirds of them pierced for windows; the rest with only blind panels. The upper part was at one time inlaid with mosaics of coloured and gilt glass, but these are now gone. The whole wall, above the marble casing, is covered with enamelled tiles, showing elaborate designs in various colours; a row in blue and white on which are verses of the Koran in interlaced characters running round the top. Within, the piers of the screens are cased in marble, and their capitals gilded; the screens themselves, which are of fine wrought iron, being very elaborate, while the arches under the dome are ornamented with rich mosaic, bordered above by verses from the Koran, and an inscription stating when the mosque was built, the whole in letters of gold. The walls and dome glitter with the richest colours, in part those of mosaics, and the stained glass in the windows exceeds, for beauty, any I have seen elsewhere. There could, indeed, I should suppose, be no building more perfectly lovely than the Mosque of Omar, more correctly known as the Dome of the Rock.

All this exquisite taste and lavish munificence is strangely expended in honour of a hump of rock, the ancient top of Moriah, which rises in the centre of the building, within the second screen, nearly five feet at its

highest point, and a foot at its lowest, above the marble pavement, and measures fifty-six feet from north to south, and forty-two feet from east to west. Had the mosque been raised in honour of the wondrous incidents connected with the spot in sacred history, it would have had a worthy aim; but to the Mahommedan it is sacred, almost entirely, because he believes that this vast rock bore the Prophet up, like a chariot, to Paradise; the finger-marks of the angel who steadied it in its amazing flight being still shown to the credulous. Yet, foolish legend discarded, this rough mountain-top has an absorbing interest to the Jew and the Christian alike. It was here that the Jebusite, Araunah, once had his threshing-floor.[1] It is, as I have said, the highest point of Mount Moriah, which sinks steeply to the valley of the Kedron, on the east, and more gently in other directions. On that yellow stretch of rock the heathen subject of King David heaped up his sheaves and cleansed with his shovel or fork the grain which his threshing-sledge had separated from the straw; throwing it up against the wind, before which the chaff flew afar, as is so often brought before us in the imagery of the sacred writers.[2] The royal palace on Zion must have looked down on this threshing-floor, and it may thus have already occurred to David's mind as a site for his Temple, before the awful incident which finally decided his choice.[3] Nor could any place so suitable have been found near Jerusalem; and it appears, besides, to have had the special sacredness of having been the scene, in far earlier times, of the offering of Isaac by the Father of the Faithful, though Araunah's use of it shows that it had not on that account been set apart from common ground. In

[1] 2 Sam. xxiv. 18, 22; 1 Chron. xxi. 18.
[2] Ps. i. 4; xxxv. 5; Job xxi. 18.
[3] 2 Chron. iii. 1.

later days, also, a special sanctity is associated with this spot as that on which, in all probability, the great altar of the Jewish Temple stood. Sir Charles Warren found that huge vaults exist on the north side of the Temple area, and that if these, and the loose earth over them, were removed, that end of the rock would show a perpendicular face, part of it having in ancient times been cut away, while in another direction a gutter cut in the rock has been found, perhaps to drain off the blood from the sacrifices on the altar.[1]

Underneath the rock, reached by a flight of steps, is a large cave, the roof of which is about six feet high, with a circular opening in it, through which light enters. The floor sounds hollow, and so do the rough sides: a proof, say the Mahommedans, that this mountain is hung in the air. There is, however, probably, a lower cave, or possibly a well, but no one is allowed to find this out. Fantastic legends, connected with every part of the whole summit, are repeated to the visitor; but to the Christian the place is too sacred to pay much heed to them. To the Mahommedan world it is "the Rock of Paradise, the Source of the Rivers of Paradise, the Place of Prayer of all Prophets, and the Foundation Stone of the World."

Though these religionists claim with perfect justice that the mosque was built by Caliph Abd-el-Melek, it is by no means certain that there were not various predecessors of this beautiful building. Mr. James Fergusson believed that it, rather than the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, is, in all essential particulars, the very Church of the Resurrection, built by Constantine over the place where our Lord was believed to have been buried, which, in his opinion, was the cave under this rock. Other experts have thought that a church stood here between

[1] *Recovery of Jerusalem*, pp. 219—222.

the reigns of Constantine and Justinian—some say, in the first third of the sixth century. It was, at any rate, for generations a Christian church under the Crusaders, and Frankish kings offered up their crowns to Christ before the rock on the day of their coronation.

The Mosque el-Aksa, which stands at the south end of the great enclosure, was originally a basilica or church built by Justinian in the sixth century in honour of the Virgin. The noble façade of arches, surmounted by a long range of pinnacles, is, however, Gothic, and appears to have been the work of the Crusaders. Within there are seven aisles, of various dates, pillars a yard thick, dividing the nave from the side aisles, and a dome rising over the centre of the transept; but the effect of the whole is poor, for the building, though 190 feet wide, and 270 feet broad, is whitewashed and coarsely painted. By this church the Templars once had their residence; and the twisted columns of their dining-hall still remain. The struggle between Moslems and Christians, at the capture of Jerusalem, was especially fierce in this building, the greater part of the ten thousand who perished by the sword of the Christian warriors falling inside and round these walls. A flight of steps outside the principal entrance leads down to a wonderful series of arched vaults, which, with the great sculptured pillars, help one to realise vividly the vast substructures needed to bring this part of the hill to the general level. When they were built, however, is a question as yet undecided; only a small portion here and there is very old.

You could wander day after day through one part or another of the strange sights of the Temple enclosure, and never tire. In one place is a Mahommedan pulpit, with its straight stair, and a beautiful canopy resting on light pillars: a work of special beauty. Minarets rise at

different points around, enhancing the picturesque effect. Fountains, venerable oratories, and tombs dot the surface. The massive Golden Gate still stands towards the centre of the eastern wall, though long since built up, from a tradition that the Christians would one day re-enter it in triumph. Seen from the inside it is a massy structure, with a flat low-domed roof, carved pilasters, and numerous small arches, slowly sinking into decay. It was always the chief entrance to the Temple from the east, but, apart from later tradition, would seem to have been kept closed from a very early period.[1] In its present form, the gateway dates from the third or, perhaps, the sixth century after Christ, and till A.D. 810 there was a flight of steps from it down to the Kedron valley. During the time of the Crusaders the gate was opened on Palm Sunday, to allow the Patriarch to ride in upon an ass, amidst a great procession bearing palm-branches, and strewing the ground before him with their clothes, in imitation of the entry of Christ. But it will, I fear, be long before a representative of the true Messiah rides through it again.

The view of the Mount of Olives from the Temple area is very fine, for only the Kedron valley, which is quite narrow, lies between the Mount and Moriah. Mount Zion rises on the south-west, but it is only by the houses and citadel that you notice the greater elevation. The Crescent flag is seen waving over the old Tower of David. On the south-east the eye follows the windings of the Valley of Jehoshaphat, which is the name given to the upper part of that of the Kedron. Into it were, one day, to fall the streams which Ezekiel describes in his vision of the restored sanctuary, as destined to pour forth from under the door-sill of the Temple, and gather to such a body as will reach the Dead Sea, deep down in its bed

[1] Ezek. xliv. 1, 2.

to the east, changing its life-destroying water to healing floods.[1] From south-west to north-west the city rises like an amphitheatre round the sacred area, as Josephus noticed in his day.[2] Part of this wide space is paved with slabs of limestone, feathered with grass at every chink, much of this being green, and sprinkled, in spring-time, with thousands of bright flowers. Olive-trees and cypresses flourish here and there, and give most welcome shade.

It was much the same thousands of years ago on this very spot. The Psalmist could then cry out, "I am like a green olive-tree in the house of God." "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing."[3] Here, protected by high walls, reclining under the peaceful shade of some tree, the pious Israelite realised his deepest joy, as he meditated on God, or bowed in prayer towards the Holy of Holies, within which Jehovah dwelt over the Mercy-seat.[4] Now in soft murmurs, now in loud exclamations of rapture, now in tones of sadness, now in triumphant singing, his heart uttered all its moods. It was his highest conception of perfect felicity that he "should dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."[5] Hither, from Dan to Beersheba, streamed the multitude that kept holy-day, ascending with the music of pipes and with loud rejoicings to the holy hill, bringing rich offerings of cattle, sheep, goats, and produce and fruit of all kinds, to the King of kings.[6] Here the choirs of Levites sang the sacred chants; here the high priest blessed the people, year by year, as he came forth from the Holy of Holies,

[1] Ezek. xlvii. 1—8. [2] Jos. *Ant.*, xv. 11, 5. [3] Ps. lii. 8; xcii. 13, 14.
[4] Ex. xxv. 22; Ps. xcix. 1. [5] Ps. xxiii. 6.
[6] 2 Chron. xxx. 5, 24; Deut. xii. 5; 2 Chron. xxxv. 7.

into which he had entered with the atoning blood, his re-appearance showing that his mediation had been accepted, and their sins forgiven. And so Christ, now within the holy place in the heavens pleading the merits of His own blood, will one day come forth again, and "appear to them that look for Him, without a sin-offering, unto salvation."[1] Here, as we are told by the Son of Sirach,[2] thousands on thousands cast themselves on the ground, at the sight of their priestly mediator, fresh from the presence of the holy and exalted Lord of Hosts. "Then shouted the sons of Aaron, and sounded the silver trumpets, and made a great noise to be heard, for a remembrance before the Most High. Then all the people hasted, and fell down to the earth upon their faces, to worship the Lord God Almighty, the Most High. Then he went down, and lifted up his hands over the whole congregation of the children of Israel, to give the blessing of the Lord with his lips, and to rejoice in His name." And at an earlier time it was here, upon the entrance of the ark into the newly-built Holy of Holies, at the Temple dedication under Solomon, that "it came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers, as one, made one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God."[3] The heavenly and earthly Fatherland of the Israelite thus seemed here to fade into each other. Who does not remember the touching cry of the Jewish prisoner from the sources of the Jordan, on his way to exile? "As

[1] Heb. ix. 28. [2] Ecclus. l. 16, 17, 20.
[3] 2 Chron. v. 13, 14.

the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. . . . For I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday."[1] But peaceful as this place is now, and sacred as it was in its earlier days, how often has it been the scene of the most embittered strife, since the times of Solomon! The first Temple, with all its glory, had gone up in smoke and flames, amidst the shouts of Nebuchadnezzar's troops, after a defence which steeped the wide area in blood; and at the conquest of the city by Titus, thousands fell, within its bounds, by the weapons of the Roman soldiers, or perished in the flames of the third Temple, amidst shrieks from the crowds on Zion, heard even above the roar of strife and of the conflagration.

[1] Ps. xlii. 1, 4.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JERUSALEM—(*Continued.*)

It is not easy to restore in imagination the appearance presented by the Temple in its most glorious days, but it must have been very magnificent. Even from what still remains, we cannot wonder that the disciples should have called the attention of their Master to the architecture around: "Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!"[1] The solid wall, at one corner, still rises to a height of 180 feet above the ancient level of the ground—now buried thus deep under rubbish; at another place it is 138 feet above it; and in one spot you may see, at a height of eighty-five feet above the original surface, a stone nearly thirty-nine feet long, four feet high, and ten feet deep, which was lifted into the air and put in its place while the wall was being built. The rubbish which now lies from sixty to nearly 100 feet deep, against different parts of the walls, hides their originally grand effect; but they were bare, and in all the dazzling whiteness of recent erection, when Christ and His disciples stood to admire them.

These amazing walls were surrounded by magnificent cloisters, which were double on the north, east, and west sides; columns, of a single piece of white marble, supporting roofs of carved cedar. The royal cloisters on the south wall were still grander, for they consisted of three

[1] Mark xiii. 1.

aisles, the roofs of which were borne up by 162 huge pillars with Corinthian capitals, distributed in four rows. The centre arch, which was higher than the two others, rose forty-five feet aloft—twenty feet above its neighbours—and the roofs of the whole, like those of the other cloisters, were of carved cedar. The front was of polished stone, joined together with incredible exactness and beauty. On all sides of the Temple, a space varying from about thirty-six to forty-five feet formed the cloisters into which, as into the Court of the Gentiles, proselytes might enter; whence its name. This was the part where the changers of provincial coins into the shekel of the sanctuary, which alone could be put into the Temple treasury, had their tables in Christ's day, and here doves were sold for offerings, and beasts for sacrifice, and salt for the altar, with whatever else was needed by worshippers: the whole a mart so unholy that our Lord, as He drove the intruders forth, declared it to be a den of thieves.[1] The magnificent cloister on the east side was called Solomon's Porch; its cool shade offered, at all times, attractions to crowds whom the Rabbis, and also our Lord, took occasion to gather round them from time to time.[2] Hither also the multitude ran after St. Peter and St. John, when they had cured the lame man at the Beautiful, or Nicanor, Gate,[3] on the east of the Court of the Priests.

A few steps upwards led from the Court of the Gentiles to a flat terrace, about twenty feet broad on the south side, and about fifteen feet on the others, its outer limit being guarded by a stone screen over four feet high, upon which, at fixed distances apart, hung notices, a cast

[1] Matt. xxi. 13; Mark xi. 17; Luke xix. 46. The Court of the Gentiles was nearly 150 feet in extent on the north and east, 100 on the west, and 300 on the south. [2] John x. 23. [3] Acts iii. 2.

from one of which is now in the Louvre, threatening death to any foreigner who should pass within. The inscription reads: "No stranger is to enter within the balustrade round the Temple enclosure. Whoever is caught will be responsible to himself for his death, which will ensue." It was for being supposed to have taken Trophimus, an Ephesian proselyte, inside these prohibitory warnings, that the Jews rose in wild excitement against St. Paul, and would have torn him in pieces had not the commandant of the fortress Antonia, on the north-west corner of the Temple grounds, hurried to his aid with a band of soldiers.[1]

A part of the inside space formed the Court of the Women, who were allowed to walk or worship here, if ceremonially clean, but not to go nearer the sanctuary. The Inner Temple stood on a platform, reached by another flight of steps through gates from below, but by the worshippers there, and in the still lower Court of the Gentiles, only so much of the Temple itself was seen as rose above a platform nearly forty feet high, forming a square more than 300 feet long on each face, on which the sacred building stood. Seven gates opened from this into the Courts of the Men of Israel and of the Priests, and three more led into the Court of the Women. One of these, the Beautiful, was also called the Nicanor Gate, because the hands of the Syrian general of that name were nailed over it, when he fell before the host of Judas Maccabæus; report alleging that he had lifted these hands, in contempt, towards the Holy Place, and sworn to destroy it. The name "Beautiful" was fitly given to this gate from its being made of almost priceless Corinthian brass, and covered with specially rich plates of gold. The other nine gates, and even their side-posts and lintels, shone

[1] Acts xxi. 26.

resplendent with a covering of gold and silver. Within them rose the Temple, reached by passing through the Court of the Israelites and that of the Priests, one above the other, with flights of steps between. Beyond and above them, on the highest terrace of all, stood the Temple; its front about 150 feet long, though the Holy Place, or Temple proper, behind this, was only about sixty feet from east to west, forty feet across, and about forty-five feet high, while the Holy of Holies was a small, dark chamber, not more than thirty feet square. In front of the Temple ran a porch, about sixteen feet deep, extending, apparently, to within forty feet of each side, and shut off from the Holy Place by a wall nine feet thick. Through this that awful chamber was entered by a door, before which hung a heavy veil; another of the finest texture, from the looms of Babylon, adorned "with blue, and fine linen, and scarlet, and purple," hanging before the sacred solitude of the Holy of Holies. A screen, in front of the porch, was surmounted by a great golden vine, which, it may be, our Lord had in mind when He spoke of Himself as the True Vine.[1]

Thirty-eight small chambers, in two storeys on the north and south, and three on the west, clung to the Temple on these three sides. The entrance was from the east, perhaps so that worshippers, while praying before Jehovah, might turn their backs on the sun, so universally honoured as the Supreme God by the heathen nations of Western Asia. Thus the men seen in Ezekiel's vision praying in "the inner court of the Lord's house, between the porch and the altar, with their backs towards the temple of the Lord, and their faces towards the east," showed that to "worship the sun" they had turned away from worshipping Jehovah.[2] The great brazen altar

[1] John xv. 1.

[2] Ezek. viii. 16.

stood, as these words of the prophet indicate, in the open space before the porch.

Such a building, rising on a marble terrace of its own, with its walls of pure white stone, covered in parts with plates of bright gold, and marble-paved courts lying one under another beneath—all held up, over the whole vast area of the levelled summit of Moriah, by walls of almost fabulous height and splendour—must have presented an appearance rarely if ever equalled by any sanctuary of ancient or modern times.

Two bridges led from Zion, the upper hill, over the Valley of the Cheese-mongers to Moriah. One of these, now known as Robinson's Arch, from its discoverer, was built thirty-nine feet north of the south-west corner, and had a span of forty-two feet: forming, perhaps, the first of a series of arches leading by a flight of stairs from the Tyropœon Valley, or Valley of the Cheese-mongers, to the broad centre aisle of Solomon's Porch, which, as we have seen, ran along the western wall of Herod's Temple. The stones, of which a few still jut from the wall of the Temple enclosure, were of great size—some from nineteen to twenty-five feet long—but all, except those forming the three lower courses, with the fine pillars that supported them, now lie more than forty feet below the present surface of the ground, where they fell when the bridge was destroyed; the pavement on which they rest is of polished stone. So deep below the level of to-day was that of this part of the city in the time of our Lord. Even this depth, however, in a place so ancient, does not represent the original surface, for below the pavement, thus deeply buried, were found remains of an older arch, and, still lower, a channel for water, hewn in the rock; perhaps one of the aqueducts made by order of Hezekiah, when he introduced his great improvements in the water-supply of the

city.[1] The masonry at the corner of the enclosure, which is ancient up to the level of the present surface and even slightly above it, shows better perhaps than any other part the perfection of the original workmanship throughout, for the blocks of stone are so nicely fitted to each other, without mortar, that even now a penknife can hardly be thrust between them. There must, of course, have been a gate through which Robinson's Arch led to the sacred area, but the present wall was built after the arched approach had been destroyed, and ignores it. About forty-three yards farther north there are the remains of another gate, which led from the western cloisters of the Temple to the city, showing by the size of the entrance when it was perfect how great the concourse must have been that passed through it, for it was nearly nineteen feet wide, and twenty-nine feet high; its lintel being formed by one enormous stone, reaching across the whole breadth, as in Egyptian temples. The extreme age of Jerusalem as a city receives another illustration in the fact that, though the gate is noticed by Josephus, its sill rests on very nearly fifty feet of accumulations over the natural rock below. It once gave access to a vaulted passage which ran up in a sharp angle from the city to the Temple area.

A little north of this gate is a spot of intense interest —the place where the Jews of both sexes, all ages, and from all countries, come daily, but especially on Fridays, to lament the destruction of their Temple, the defilement of their city, and the sufferings of their race. Ever since the fall of Jerusalem, the Israelite has mourned, in deepest sorrow, over his religious and national griefs, but the faith that Zion will one day rise again from her degradation to more than her former glory, is alike invincible and amazing. At least seventy feet of rubbish lie heaped

[1] 2 Chron. xxxii. 3.

over the ground where the mourners assemble, so high is the present pavement above that trodden by their fathers; but some courses of the ancient Temple wall still rise above it, and it is believed that this point is nearest to where the Holy of Holies once stood. Huge bevelled masses of stone lie in fair order one over another, defying the violence of man and natural decay. The Jews cannot enter the sacred enclosure any more than the Christians, but here, at least, they obtained many centuries ago, by a heavy ransom, the privilege of touching and kissing the holy stones. Prayer-book in hand they stand in their fur caps and long black gaberdines, reciting supplications for Zion, in hope that the set time to favour her may speedily come. The Seventy-ninth Psalm is often read aloud, and is always in their hearts: "O God, the heathen are come into Thine inheritance; Thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem in heaps. . . Pour out Thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known Thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon Thy name"[1] The most touching litanies are recited; one of them beginning thus:—

"For the palace that lies waste;
For the Temple that is destroyed;
For the walls that are torn down;
For our glory that is vanished;
For the great stones that are burned to dust;"

the hearers, after every lament, responding:—

"Here sit we now, lonely, and weep!"

The Jews live in their own quarter on the eastern slope of Zion, close to the old Temple area, but their part of Jerusalem is as unattractive as their sorrows are touching. Their streets are the filthiest in a filthy city, and

[1] Ps. lxxix. 1—6.

their dwellings among the poorest. They may have had "wide houses and large chambers, and windows cut out, and ceilings of cedar, and walls of vermilion" in the days of Jeremiah,[1] but these are traditions of a very distant past. Until recently, indeed, their condition was even more wretched than it is now, "The Israelitish Alliance" in Western Europe having afforded them systematic help for a number of years, though the first necessity, beyond question, is to teach them the most elementary ideas of cleanliness. How they live amidst the foulness of their alleys is a wonder. They are all foreigners, for during many centuries no Jew was permitted to dwell in the Holy City. Now, however, year after year, numbers come, especially from Spain and Poland, to spend their last days in their dear Jerusalem, and be buried beside their fathers, in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, the scene, as they believe, of the resurrection and of the final judgment.[2] To be there saves them, they think, a long journey after death, through the body of the earth, from the spot where they may lie to this final gathering-place of their people. They come to Jerusalem to die, not to live, but many are in the prime of life and have families, and the rising generation are less gloomy in their views. The young men, in all the glory of love-locks, fur-edged caps, and long gaberdines, are as keen after business or pleasure as their brethren elsewhere, their creed evidently being a settled aim to make the best of at least the present world.

To make sure of a part in the kingdom of the Messiah, and the glories of the restored Temple and city, the Jerusalem Israelite leads a strenuously religious life, according to his idea of religion; striving with painful earnestness to fulfil all the ten thousand Rabbinical precepts founded

[1] Jer. xxii. 14. [2] Joel iii. 2, 12; Zech. xiv. 4.

on the Law of Moses, so as to be like St. Paul, "blameless" touching that righteousness.[1] The Law is studied through the whole night in the schools; frivolous applications of the sacred letter being eagerly sought, in supposed fulfilment of the command, "Ye shall teach these, My words, to your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down and when thou risest up."[2] In the synagogue, men are found at all hours, busy reading the Talmud. The Sabbath is observed with more than its ancient strictness. From the evening of Friday to that of Saturday, no light or fire is kindled, in accordance with the injunction, "Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the Sabbath day."[3] To go beyond two thousand steps on the holy day is a grave sin, for it is written, "Abide ye every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day:"[4] a precept understood so literally by one Jewish sect in past times that they never rose on the Sabbath from the place where its first moment found them. Indeed, the Essenes, a sect of Jewish ascetics in the days of our Lord, would not even lift a vessel to quench their thirst on that day.[5] In the afternoon of each day there is preaching in the synagogues. At the Passover only unleavened bread is eaten, and booths are raised at the Feast of Tabernacles.[6] But the most solemn day of the year is the one preceding the Jewish New Year's Day, in September. Penitential prayers are said for three hours before sunrise, and every Jew allows himself to receive forty stripes save one,[7] the flagellator saying to the person he chastises, "My son, despise not

[1] Phil. iii. 6.
[2] Deut. vi. 7.
[3] Ex. xxxv. 3.
[4] Ex. xvi. 29.
[5] Herzog, 2te Auf., xiii. 167.
[6] Lev. xxiii. 6, 40; Neh. viii. 15, 16.
[7] Deut. xxv. 3; 2 Cor. xi. 24.

the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of His correction. For whom the Lord loveth, He correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." [1] On the other hand, there is great rejoicing in the synagogues at some of the other feasts, the congregation leaping, dancing, singing, and shouting in their gladness. On some of these occasions the multitude stream forth with bright faces, men and women singing aloud, and make a procession through their quarter, with the roll of the Law in their midst. The traditions of their fathers thus live with them still, for, in some such way, David, three thousand years ago, in the same place, "danced before the Lord with all his might." [2]

If the condition of the Israelites in Jerusalem, of whom there are about four thousand, is in general very humble and wretched, it is made still harder by their frozen bigotry. Protestant missions, especially in late years, have undoubtedly made some progress, but the mass of the Hebrew population still hate the light, and cling to the great memories of the past, embittered against the whole human race. It is a striking thought, that in all probability the Prætorium, in which our Saviour was tried and condemned, lay in the quarter now inhabited by the Jews.[3] A great marble-paved space extended in front of it, surrounded by halls, resting on rows of lofty pillars. On a raised platform facing this square, the judgment-seat of Pilate was placed, and here the Innocent One was shown by the Governor to the fanatical mob below, only, however, to raise a wild outcry of "Crucify Him! Crucify Him! His blood come on us and on our children." [4] But those children were still in the vigour of life when the

[1] Prov. iii. 11; Heb. xii. 5, 6.
[2] 2 Sam. vi. 14.
[3] Riehm, p. 699.
[4] Matt. xxvii. 22, 23, 25.

last hideous, despairing struggle with the Romans drove them hither, after the Temple had been burned, and turned the mansion and Judgment-hall of Pilate into the scene of their final destruction. Victorious here, as already in the upper city, the legionaries cut down everyone they could, till the streets were covered with dead bodies and the whole town was soaked in gore; many a burning house, if we may trust Josephus, having its flames extinguished in blood.[1] The descendants of that unhappy generation have built their homes over the rubbish under which Pilate's Judgment-courts are deeply buried, but their souls are still bound in the same chains as then enslaved their ancestors, and their darkness is still as profound. Were Christ to stand before them to-day, there can be no doubt He would meet the same cry—to send Him to the cross. The time to favour Zion, in the highest sense, has not yet come. But amidst all their humiliation and misery, they still draw consolation from the fact that they inhabit the Holy City, and have had part of Mount Zion itself assigned them as their quarter. Even this cannot be without influence on their spiritual life, in spite of their narrowness and pride. For have not their ancient psalmists and prophets sung its praises? "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, the city of the great King."[2] To be brought thus, continually, to the contemplation of Jehovah, must exercise a mighty power in raising and purifying their inner religious thoughts.

A short distance north of the Wailing-place of the Jews are the remains of the second bridge,[3] which formed part of another great viaduct from the Temple grounds over the valley to Mount Zion: the most striking relic yet found of ancient Jerusalem. It is on a line with David Street, which passes over part of it, but other

[1] Jos. *Bell. Jud.*, vi. 8, 5. [2] Ps. xlviii. 2. [3] See *ante*, p. 516.

foundations of arches, vaults, and chambers extend, at the side of the street, for more than 250 feet from the Temple enclosure. One hall seems as if it had been a guard-house as long ago as the time of the Maccabees, and even now it is connected with a long subterranean gallery, constructed, most probably, to enable soldiers to pass from David's Tower, near the Joppa Gate, to the Temple, without being seen. A strange use of it by Simon, the son of Giorias, one of the leaders of the final insurrection against the Romans, vividly recalls the scene after the capture of Jerusalem by Titus; for by this tunnel he passed from the upper city to the Temple enclosure, trying to frighten the Roman soldiers, and thus escape by pretending to be a ghost. The Castle, or Tower, of Antonia, which owed its name to Herod the Great's flattery of Mark Antony, then his patron, stood, as has been noticed, on the site of the present Turkish barracks, at the north-west corner of the Temple area. A mass of rock, separated, on the north, from the low hill of Bezetha by a ditch 165 feet wide, and from twenty-six to thirty-three feet deep, formed the plateau from which it rose. Of great size, it was the key to the possession of the Temple, as the citadel was to that of the upper town. The rock foundation was seventy-five feet high, its face cased over with smooth stones like the lower part of the Tower of David, "so that anyone who tried either to climb or descend it had no foothold." At each corner of the fort were towers; the one at the south-east, over 100 feet high, to overlook the whole Temple area, while that at the south-west had underground passages by which soldiers could be marched into the cloisters of the Temple, to quell any tumult.

Mount Zion falls very steeply to the south and south-

west, and must therefore have been very easily defended. In the grounds of the Protestant Schools, moreover, on the south-west corner a system of rock-cisterns and a series of perpendicular escarpments of the rock, twenty-five feet high, which appear to have been continued, in huge steps, to the bottom of the hill far below, have been discovered, which show that the Jebusites, who originally held Jerusalem, spared no pains to make it impregnable. It was natural, therefore, that they should taunt David when he wished to get possession of it, telling him, "Thou shalt not come in hither; for even the blind and the lame will keep thee away."[1] A fiery spirit like that of the shepherd-king could ill brook such an insult. "Whoso smiteth the Jebusites, and hurleth both blind and lame down the cliff, shall be chief captain,"[2] cried he, in his anger, and Joab won the award. Once master of Zion, David began that enriching of it with palaces and public buildings which, continued under his successors, made it, till the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, the concentration of all the pomp and splendour of the kingdom, that associated with the Temple excepted. It was, apparently, on Zion that he built his palace, through the skilled aid of Phœnician architects, masons, and carpenters;[3] the very wood coming, in rafts, from Tyre to Joppa, whence it was dragged up to Jerusalem. Near the royal dwelling probably, rose the barracks spoken of in Nehemiah as "the House of the Heroes,"[4] for the Crethi and Plethi,[5] who formed the king's body-guard: a band of the warlike Philistines, enrolled by David for his personal defence, after the subjugation of the

[1] 2 Sam. v. 6.
[2] 2 Sam. v. 8. Ewald's reading. Keil follows it.
[3] 2 Sam. v. 11; 1 Chron. xiv. 1.
[4] Neh. iii. 16.
[5] 2 Sam. viii. 18; xv. 18; xx. 7, 23; 1 Kings i. 38, 44; 1 Chron. xviii. 17.

Philistine plain. The two names seem to imply this, for they are respectively those of the first immigration of the race from Crete in the patriarchal times, and of the second immigration in the days of the Judges. Captain Conder, indeed, speaks of the Philistines as called Cherethites or Crethi, from "Keratiyeh," a village still existing in the Philistine plain, and of Pelethites as simply equivalent to "immigrants"—he supposes, from Egypt; but neither of these details disproves that the original exodus of the race was from Caphtor,[1] which is admittedly Crete.

The ambition of the great king, true to the spirit of an Oriental, turned especially upon the construction of a grand series of rock-hewn tombs for himself and his descendants, on the south-west face of the Tyropœon Valley.[2] There, perhaps, to this day, lie the twelve successors of David, from Solomon to Ahaz, with Jehoiada, the great high priest, but without Uzziah, who was excluded for his leprosy.[3] The tomb of David was still well known in the time of the Acts of the Apostles,[4] but, according to Josephus, it had been opened, first by Hyrcanus, and then by Herod, to rob it of the treasures which tradition affirmed Solomon to have buried with his father.[5] So early as the third century after Christ, however, the true site of this "acre of royal dust" had been lost, and we can only hope that excavation may one day bring it again to light. Authorities differ as to the position of Solomon's palace, but no less an expert than Dr. Mühlau thinks it was built on the western side of the Tyropœon, and thus on Mount Zion.[6] On the same spot, at a later date, rose also the palace of the Asmonæan

[1] Amos ix. 7.
[2] Neh. iii. 16.
[3] 2 Chron. xxiv. 16; xxvi. 23.
[4] Acts ii. 29.
[5] Jos. *Ant.*, vii. 15, 3; xiii. 8, 4; *Bell. Jud.*, i. 2, 5.
[6] Riehm, p. 684.

kings, and that of Agrippa II. Under Solomon the citizens had the glory of Zion increased by the magnificent "House of the Forest of Lebanon," so called from its costly cedar pillars, numerous, it was boasted, as the trees of a wood, and, besides other grand buildings, by the palace of his Egyptian queen. In the days of Christ, the great palace of Herod, as has been said, occupied the top of the hill, behind where the citadel now stands; its magnificent gardens, its broad waters, shaded by trees, its gorgeous halls, and the height and strength of the great wall which enclosed its grounds, with the mighty towers of Hippicus, Mariamne, and Phasael[1] at its corners, making the whole one of the glories of Jerusalem. At the foot of the slope of Zion, to the east, immediately in front of the spot on which the palace of Agrippa II. afterwards stood, was the Xystus, a great colonnade, enclosing an open space, used especially for athletic games after the Greek fashion, but occasionally for public assemblies, while behind it, in Christ's day, was the Council Hall, to which, as the place where the High Council sat, St. Paul was "brought down" from the Tower of Antonia, after he had been taken prisoner because of the tumult about Trophimus.[2] Near this also, apparently, were the theatre, built by Herod in servile imitation of Roman manners, and the public buildings connected with the official head-quarters of Pilate, though the grand palace of Herod, on the top of the hill, was, no doubt, also used as a State building.

Amidst all this splendour of public architecture, the houses of the citizens, if we may judge from the immemorial characteristics of the East, were mean and wretched,

[1] Called Hippicus after a friend of Herod; Mariamne after his favourite wife, whom he murdered; Phasaelus after his brother, who was slain in the Parthian war.

[2] Acts xxii. 30; xxiii. 10; xxi. 29.

for a despotic State in a certain stage of civilisation can boast of magnificent temples, palaces, and State edifices, while the homes of the people are, perhaps, even more wretched than in earlier and simpler times. So it was in Nineveh, Babylon, and the ruined cities of Central America, and so it is even in Constantinople at this day, if we except the houses of wealthy foreigners. Nor, perhaps, can Britain say very much when she remembers the slums and alleys of her cities. But all the glory of Zion has passed away. "Jehovah hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and hath not pitied; He hath thrown down, in His wrath, the strongholds of the daughter of Judah; He hath brought them down to the ground. He hath poured out His fury like fire; her gates are sunk into the ground; He hath destroyed and broken her bars."[1]

The present walls of Jerusalem were built by Sultan Suleiman in the sixteenth century, and give picturesqueness, if not strength, to the town. An inscription over the Joppa Gate, and others in various places, record that the order to rebuild them was given in A.D. 1542;[2] the materials used being the remains of the older walls, which were several times thrown down and restored during the 200 years of the Crusades. The stones themselves are evidently ancient, and are all hewn, and bedded in mortar, but they are not very large. Seen from the heights around, with their towers and battlements, the walls look very imposing, though their chief advantage now seems to be the broad walk which a breastwork inside supplies, enabling one to look out on the landscape round the whole city. There are only four gates open through this antiquated defence, one on each side of the city; but there were formerly four more. Passing south, through the road in a line with Christian Street, which leads to the

[1] Lam. ii. 5, 9.

[2] Year of the Flight, 920.

Damascus Gate on the north, we come to Zion Gate on the south. It is simply an arch in the wall, filled in with dressed stones, so as only to leave space for a moderate-sized two-leaved door, with an Arabic inscription over its lintel. Two short, narrow slits in the wall, like loop-holes, with an ornamental arch over them, and a few rosettes and ornaments of carved stone here and there, are the only signs of its being an entrance to the city; but the wall, as you come out, is seen to be very thick. From within a dry stone wall on the opposite side of the narrow road, a great prickly pear shoots out its hand-like leaves almost to the height of the top of the high central arch. It grows at the edge of a field, green, when I saw it, with barley which had been sown over the rubbish of the ancient glory of Mount Zion.

On the left of the gate, inside the wall, is a row of hovels given up to lepers, who, through the day, sit begging outside the gate, and at other parts round the city. Suffering from a hopeless disease, and cast out from among men, these wretched creatures live together, under a sheikh who is himself a leper. Dependent on charity, they sit in groups, apparently cheery enough; and when someone passes, they, without rising, clamour for alms, which are thrown into a tin dish on the ground before them. Now, as in the case of Job, their "skin is broken and become loathsome"[1] with putrid ulcers. Often, as with him, the sufferer itches all over, so that it is a relief "to take a potsherd and scrape himself withal."[2] Often, again, the breath corrupts, so that the husband becomes "a stranger to his own wife."[3] The disease is hereditary, but bad nourishment and a wretched home lead to its development, and possibly in some cases to its origin. There are two kinds, both found in Palestine, and

[1] Job ii. 7; vii. 5. [2] Job ii. 8. [3] Job xix. 17.

both almost equally horrible. Some months before the outbreak of leprosy the victim is languid and cold, shivers and becomes feverish by turns. Reddish spots then make their appearance on the skin, with dark red lumps under them, more or less movable. In the face, particularly, these lumps run into one another, till they look like bunches of grapes. The mouth and lips swell, the eyes run, and the whole body is often tormented with itching. The mucous membrane begins to corrupt, and lumps form internally also. The eyes, throat, tongue, mouth, and ears become affected. At last the swellings burst, turn into dreadful festering sores, and heal up again, but only to break out elsewhere. The fingers become bent, and the limbs begin to rot away. This kind of leprosy differs from what is known as the smooth leprosy, but even that is sufficiently dreadful, as it produces painful, flat, inflamed patches on the skin, which turn into revolting sores. Other diseases, moreover, are brought on by leprosy, and yet it is so slowly fatal that the sufferer sometimes drags on his wretched life for twenty years, or even more, before death relieves him. The children of leprous parents do not show the disease, generally, till they attain manhood or womanhood, but then it is certain to break out. Among the ancient Jews it was very common, yet there was only one case in the Jewish hospital in Jerusalem, between the years 1856 and 1860, of a Jew suffering from it. In early Bible times it made the sufferer unclean, so that he was required to live outside the camp, while, to prevent anyone being defiled by approaching him, he was further obliged to rend his clothes and keep his head bare, and to put a covering upon his upper lip, and cry, "Unclean, unclean!"[1] It was in accordance with this that the ten men who were lepers stood afar off as Jesus passed by,

[1] Lev. xiii. 45.

and "lifted up their voices;"[1] and it was in compliance with the Levitical law that our Lord said to them, when cleansed, "Go, shew yourselves unto the priests." It was necessary that a leper, when cured, should go to Jerusalem, and, after examination by a priest, take part in a number of ceremonies, make certain offerings, and obtain a written declaration from the priests of his being healed, before he could go back to free intercourse with his fellows.[2]

Under a respectable government leprosy could no doubt be extinguished in Palestine, as it has been in Britain and other countries where it was once common. But for ages the wretched beings, without palates, or with no hands, or with swollen and hideous faces, have been allowed to marry and live together, at the gates of Jerusalem, perpetuating the plague in their unhappy offspring. Nor is it confined to the Holy City. Lepers are found over the whole country. Precautions are, indeed, taken to guard the healthy, but as leprosy is not contagious, these are in reality of no value. In Bible times, anyone thought to be attacked was shut up, and removed outside the city on the disease showing itself; he, his clothes, his very house, and everything he touched, being pronounced unclean. Nowadays, he may, perhaps, be allowed to live immediately inside the gates of Jerusalem, but he has still a separate dwelling assigned him, and everyone keeps aloof from him as polluted and dangerous. Nor will any one touch a leper, or eat with him, or use anything he has handled. Arabs thrust a leper away from their encampments.

The prevalence of leprosy among the ancient Jews gave a strange colour to the fancies of the Western nations of antiquity respecting them. Tacitus thus gives the

[1] Luke xvii. 14.

[2] See Geikie, *Life and Words of Christ*, ii. 12—15.

various opinions afloat concerning them, viz, that Crete was their original home, its great mountain Ida being the source of their name, "Judæi;" that they were a colony of Egyptians who emigrated, under the leadership of Hierosolymus and Judah, through the pressure of population on the Nile; that they were Ethiopians whom fear and hatred forced to leave their country; that they were an Assyrian race, who, having no lands, established themselves in Egypt, and finally spread to Syria; and, lastly, that they were the descendants of the Solymi, a nation famous in Homer; whence the name of their capital, Hierosolyma. All this, however, he owns to be doubtful. What is more generally admitted, he continues, is that Egypt being infected with a kind of leprosy which covered the whole body, the king, after consulting the oracle of Ammon respecting the means of removing it, was ordered to purge his kingdom of lepers, who seemed hateful to the gods, and to send them off to other lands. All the diseased, having therefore been searched out and collected, were left in the midst of the desert. On being thus abandoned, they gave way to despair, except one, Moses, who urged them to look for help neither from the gods nor from man, since they were abandoned by both, but to put their faith in him as a Heaven-sent leader, promising that, if they followed him, he would deliver them from their miseries. To this they agreed, and began their march, ignorant of the way or its dangers. Nothing, however, distressed them as they went on so much as the want of water; but when they were in extremities, sinking, exhausted, along the whole line of march, a herd of wild asses passed from the open field to a rocky place, hidden by woods, and Moses, having followed, in the thought that the richness of the grass boded the nearness of springs, discovered great fountains of water. This saved them, so that after a further continuous

march of six days, they, on the seventh, having defeated the inhabitants, won the land in which are their city and Temple.[1]

All this is so curious that perhaps I may quote a little more. To put the nation thoroughly under his control, says Tacitus, Moses gave them an entirely new religion, the opposite of that of any other people. In it all is abhorred which we revere, and all is revered which we abhor. An image of the beast which had relieved their thirst and saved them, was set up, as sacred, in their Holy of Holies. They sacrifice the ram, as if in contempt of the god Ammon (who was ram-headed), and for the same reason they offer up the ox, which the Egyptians worship under the name Apis. They abstain from pork, in memory of the shameful disease under which they suffered so terribly: a disease to which the pig is liable.[2]

Much in this is, of course, fanciful, but it is certain that the Hebrews brought leprosy with them from Egypt, for at the very commencement of their forty years' wanderings, Moses commanded that every leper should be put out of the camp,[3] and the disease could not have been brought on in the wilderness. It had, therefore, no doubt, broken out through their miseries while in Egypt, which we may the better imagine when we recollect that Josephus speaks of their having been sent to quarries on the eastern side of the Nile, to cut out the huge blocks used in Egyptian architecture.[4] There, he tells us, "they remained for a long time." Condemnation to the hideous slavery of this life was a usual punishment under the Pharaohs for criminals and all who gave the State

[1] Tac. *Hist.*, v. 2, 3. [2] Tac. *Hist.*, v. 4. [3] Num. v. 2.

[4] Jos. *Cont. Ap.*, i. 26. Tacitus appears to have used Manetho, from whom Josephus quotes, or perhaps he quoted from Josephus, who flourished A.D. 38—97. Tacitus lived A.D. 61—117.

trouble, the unfortunates being banished to the quarries with their wives and children, without regard to age, even their relatives sometimes sharing their fate.[1] In later ages, great numbers of Christians, many of them of prominent social position, were thus condemned to the porphyry quarries between the Nile and the Red Sea, and others were sent to those in the Thebais.[2] The unspeakable wretchedness of an existence in such burning craters as these quarries must have been, without care, shelter, or sufficient food, and with unbroken toil under the lash, may well have lowered the system, till leprosy and diseases of similar origin took wide hold of the sufferers.

That leprosy was very common among the ancient Jews, is in any case certain, for their laws are very full and stringent with respect to it, and enumerate various forms of the disease.[3] They even speak of leprosy in woollen or linen garments, or in leather, and, still more strange, in houses, but it seems probable that these passages refer to skin diseases resembling leprosy, and which are therefore classed by Moses with it. It is well known that many such skin ailments, which to the untrained eye may easily be confounded with leprosy, spring from microscopic vermin,[4] or from the minute sporules of some kinds of fungus, and both these sources of dire calamity cling to garments and to household utensils, and even to the stones and mortar of a house. This appears to be the true explanation of the Levitical laws respecting "leprosy" in inanimate substances, and they were clearly wise and philosophical, for modern science is no less concerned than they were with germs and their propagation.

A comparatively broad street leads first west, then

[1] Ebers, *Durch Gosen*, p. 155.
[2] Eus. *Hist. Eccles.*, viii.; *Martyrs of Palestine*, c. 8.
[3] Lev. xiii.; xiv. [4] Acari.

north, from Zion Gate to the open space before the Tower of David. On the south lies the ploughed field, over the wreck of the past; on the west, after turning the corner, you see the great gardens connected with the Armenian Monastery, which provides accommodation for several thousand pilgrims. The church belonging to this establishment is grand with lamps, carpets, pictures, and gilding. A fine house for the Patriarch is appropriately connected with a cemetery in which all his predecessors lie buried. The monastery is said to stand on the site of the house of the high priest Caiaphas, and, in keeping with this veracious tradition, the stone which closed the Holy Sepulchre is shown under the church altar, and the spots pointed out where Christ was in prison, where Peter denied Him, and where the cock was perched when it crew, though the surface of the Jerusalem of Christ's day, as I have mentioned, lies buried beneath some thirty feet of rubbish. It is pleasant to look away from these monkish stupidities to the glorious gardens, the fairest in Jerusalem, with their tall poplars and many other kinds of trees waving above the city walls.

Just before reaching the open space at David's Tower, a short way from the street, on the right, is the English Protestant Church, for the English-speaking population, which mainly consists of visitors. It is only within a few decades that Evangelical religion has obtained such a permanent footing in the Holy City, but since it has become naturalised, if I may so speak, it has attracted a steadily-growing interest in the country. The time is past when a devout soul like Luther could think that God cares just as much for the cows of Switzerland as for the Holy Grave which lay in the hands of the Saracens. The great importance to the intelligent study of the Bible of a closer acquaintance with Palestine is universally

recognised, and the land of Holy Scripture has been felt to have claims on the loving interest of all Christians, as that from which the salvation of the world went forth. The Jewish Mission, of which I have already spoken, was the fruit of this newly-awakened enthusiasm, though experience seems to show that Jerusalem is precisely the most unfavourable sphere for its success. But preaching to the Jews is not the only form of local Christian activity. As it was desirable to raise the spiritual condition of native Christians generally, by a diffusion of simple Evangelical truth, Prussia and England in conjunction, at the suggestion of King Frederick William IV., founded a bishopric, to give Protestantism a more imposing representation in Jerusalem. The present church also was, after a time, built, chiefly with English money, and Prussian and English Consulates were established, giving additional weight to the Reformed creed. Hospitals for Jews, and also for all nationalities, without distinction, have been founded and are in active operation, showing, perhaps more strongly than anything else could, how true and deep is the interest Evangelical religion takes in all human sorrows. A child's hospital has been established by Dr. Sandreckski, an accomplished Prussian, and is maintained at his own risk, the subscriptions towards it being often deficient. I visited it and the English hospitals, and can honestly praise them both, though I confess that my heart went out most tenderly to that for children, which was filled when I went through it. The Germans also have a hospital for themselves, admirably managed. Evangelical missions of other kinds are not wanting, and it is only right to say they could in no place be more needed.

If the rigorous observance of religious forms, including prayer and the worship of God, were enough, Jerusalem

might be pronounced, in fact as in name, the Holy City. It is the same with the Jew of to-day as with his ancestors, who wearied themselves with offerings and other external observances, but were so corrupt and morally worthless as to rouse the bitterest reproaches of the prophets. "Rend your hearts, and not your garments," cried Joel, "and turn unto the Lord your God."[1] "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit," sang the Psalmist.[2] Such prophet voices are no less needed in Jerusalem now. Conscience seems asleep; the moral sense dead. That it is possible to trade without lying and fraud is as monstrous an idea to the Oriental to-day as it was when Jesus the Son of Sirach wrote, "As a nail sticketh fast between the joinings of the stones, so doth sin stick close between buying and selling."[3] The first consideration of the vendor is the extent to which he may presume on the simplicity of his customer, and so skilled in trickery are all traders alike—Moslems, Christians, and Jews—that the webs of lies they spin, and the depth of their wretched cunning, are entirely beyond the conceptions of the Western world. Indeed, they even boast of their cleverness in lying. Nor is this the only great sin infecting the community, and condoned by the corruptness of local public opinion; meanness, pettiness, and baseness are so common that it must be very hard to walk uprightly and without hypocrisy in Jerusalem.

It is to the lasting honour of Bishop Gobat that he saw the necessity of religious education, to raise the moral tone of the Christian population. His school-house, a stately building, stands immediately above the steep descent of Mount Zion. It was founded in 1853, and, when I visited it, had forty-five boys and thirteen youths, who might be called students, but no day scholars. This is a much smaller

[1] Joel ii. 13. [2] Ps. li. 17. [3] Ecclus. xxvii. 2.

attendance than at the American college at Beyrout, but perhaps the locality is less favourable. There is, besides, a school for girls in the city, with seventy on the books when I was in Jerusalem; this is a day school. The Germans also have training schools. To the east of Bishop Gobat's school lies a pleasant garden, divided by a wall from the English burial-ground. In laying out this, vast masses of rubbish had to be removed, and a broad terrace was thus laid bare, cut off on the north from the higher rock by a perpendicular escarpment. Fragments of the old wall of the city still remained on the top of this escarpment when it was first uncovered, and a number of hewn stones lay around. There are, moreover, remains of a rock-hewn stair, and, as I have said, a number of rock-hewn cisterns, with a round hole in the covering through which the old Jebusites once drew up water. The stair without question formed a comparatively secret way from the city walls to the bottom of the valley.

The streets of Jerusalem, like those of all Oriental cities or towns, are left at night in total darkness, except where a feeble lamp, hung out by a kindly householder, sheds a glimmer for a few yards. Nor is there any cheering light from the houses themselves, for there are no windows except high up, and the thick lattice shuts in any feeble beam there may be in a few higher chambers. No one, therefore, can move about without a lantern, since to do so would insure a speedy fall over the rough stones, or headlong precipitation into some gulf; not to speak of dangers from the town dogs, and the nameless filth of the side streets. It is, therefore, obligatory to carry one's own light, and anyone found abroad without a lantern after nine o'clock is at once stopped by the turbaned curiosities who do duty as watchmen.

The population of Jerusalem is about 30,000, who

are divided and subdivided into no fewer than twenty-four distinct religious parties, more than half of which are Christian; the whole showing anything rather than brotherly love to each other. It has often been a question how the vast multitudes who in ancient times thronged to the Passover, found room in a place which the configuration of the ground prevented from ever being much larger than it is now; but we have, at least, a slight help towards understanding the possibilities of an Eastern town in this respect, in the sights presented at Jerusalem each Easter. Thousands of pilgrims of all the Oriental Christian nationalities are then in the city, and at the same time vast multitudes of Mahommedans arrive from every Moslem country, and even from India, to pray within the sacred enclosure on Mount Moriah; the object of the institution of this counter-pilgrimage, if one may call it so, having been, apparently, to secure the presence in the Holy City of a great body of "true believers" when the Christians were assembled in force. At these times every khan, convent, and lodging-house is crowded, tents are pitched outside the walls, and all available spots within the city are used for sleeping-places by the poorer pilgrims, who cook their simple food in the open air, and lie through the night in the streets. The open space before the Tower of David is a favourite spot for this bivouac; men, women, and children cowering as closely as they can on its rough stones. It must have been the same in ancient Jerusalem, but there was the great additional aid that every family opened its rooms, and even its roofs, to pilgrims; inns being then unknown. Besides, a convenient fiction of the Rabbis extended the sacred limits of Jerusalem, during the feasts, as far as Bethany, so that the thousands who could find no space inside the walls had ample room without them.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ROUND JERUSALEM.

The Joppa Gate lay nearest to my hotel, and was, hence, that by which I commonly passed outside the walls. The Valley of Hinnom sank, at first, very gradually, to the south-east. About 500 yards to the west, upon rising ground at the side of the road to Gaza, was the leper hospital; on the left, from its deep, broad ditch, rose a mass of huge walls and low towers, forming the citadel, over which floated the Turkish flag. A minaret towered up proudly beyond, while from the gardens inside the crenelated rampart rose some olive-trees, and the outside sloping walls of the Titanic base were feathered everywhere with the creeping plants which in Palestine take the place of our ivy. The whole constituted a grim, forbidding Bastille, with memories red with blood. A broad, bare space west of it, looking down the valley, is a favourite spot for the tents of travellers. Clumps of ancient olive-trees, growing on the open slopes, dot the gradual descent, and are in great favour with camel-drivers for their shade, in which the beasts can rest, and they themselves eat their simple meals. As we descend the valley, the east side, which is Mount Zion, sinks, almost at once, quite steeply, while on the west the slope is gentle. The prevailing colour of the barren hills is yellow, but the young spring green of some small fields down the valley, and a sprinkling of olive-trees

on the west, and the dark foliage of the poplars rising from the Armenian gardens, over the weather-worn city wall, soften the wildness of the view. Yet, as Strabo said in the generation before Christ, Jerusalem is very stony, and the environs are both barren and parched.[1] The road was enlivened with travellers of all nations—Arabs and their camels; asses with every possible form of load; turbaned pedestrians; veiled women, and pilgrims of both sexes, coming back to Jerusalem, or setting out from it. How much men freely undergo in the hope of earning heaven, so long as the self-denial leaves their inner lives untouched! There were almost as many women as men among these far-travelled visitors to the holy shrines; but while all had expended so much "bodily exercise which profiteth little" in honour of their religion, how many worshipped in spirit and in truth, having begun by purifying the temple of the soul? A good many, let us hope, but yet——! Lepers sat at the roadside begging, with their tin dishes before them for alms; some very far gone in their malady; others apparently as yet untouched by it, though certain after a time to be as sorely afflicted as the rest. Well might one pity them.

Passing downwards under the proud towers and walls of the citadel, one reaches a path leading to the top of Mount Zion by a steep ascent. The summit is flat, or at most gently undulating, between the city wall and the steep side of the hill, and, as I have before said, is in some places turned into small fields, protected by old walls of dry stone. Most of the surface, however, is used as the Christian cemetery, different strips being set apart for Latins, Greeks, Armenians, and foreigners, who sleep peacefully under the rubbish of the ancient Jerusalem. The English Protestant

[1] Strabo, *Geog.*, p. 880, ed. 1570.

cemetery is distinct from this; the former opens from the ground of Bishop Gobat's schools, and is sacred, already, with the dust of not a few of our countrymen. Some women were sitting beside a new grave in the larger burial-ground, weeping loudly and almost convulsively, so that one would have supposed them overwhelmed with sorrow for the loss of a dear friend or relation. But it appeared that all this to-do was only professional acting, duly hired for so much coin, and meant no more than the groans and weeping of so many stage damsels in a theatre. It seems strange that such simulated grief should find a market, but is it much more unreal than the palls, bands, feathers, and other hideous fripperies which our undertakers furnish at a fixed scale of prices? At any rate it is very old. Wailing women are the counterpart, in the primitive East, of our funeral music for the rich, or great, or good, and their office is to express the deep emotion of the survivors. The hired mourners raise their shrieks in the house of death, in the funeral procession, and at the grave, to which they come for seven successive mornings to renew their lamentations. One begins and the others join, with skilled dexterity of words, tones, and attitudes. Thus it was in the house of Jairus, when his little daughter lay dead,[1] and thus it was when "great lamentation" was made over St. Stephen,[2] and in all other cases where grief for the dead is mentioned in Scripture.[3]

The most touching feature in burials in the East is the quickness with which they follow death. As dissolution approaches, a sick-chamber is still thronged, as it was in the troubled home of Jairus, with a crowd of neighbours and friends, all frantic with grief. Mr. Mills[4] mentions

[1] Matt. ix. 24; Mark v. 38.
[2] Acts viii. 2.
[3] See *ante*, p. 177.
[4] Mills, *Nablus*, p. 152.

one case of a poor dying woman whom he visited. Her brother supported her, and the rest pressed round, raising their hands and bursting out into agonising shrieks; the noise and the crowd being themselves enough to kill her. Indeed, she died in the midst of the tumult, just perhaps as the daughter of Jairus did. She breathed her last about eleven in the morning, and her funeral took place at three the same afternoon. The friends assembled at that hour and bore away the body, which was simply shrouded in white calico, without any coffin, and laid on a bier much like our own, except that it had a high border round it to prevent the corpse from being shaken off. The women took the foremost place in the funeral procession, but in this case there were no hired mourners, as there are in Mahommedan funerals, for the deceased was a Christian, and the real sorrow of those who attended her to the grave needed no art to deepen the sadness of the cries which broke continually from them. The grave was dug without any shovel or other tool, simply by hand, with the aid of a chance stone. As the corpse lay awaiting interment, it was still quite warm, but a doctor, sent for by Mr. Mills, pronounced life extinct. The grave was only about two feet deep, with a layer of stones on the bottom and at the sides, barely leaving room enough to cover the body. When it had been laid in its shallow bed, large stones were put across, resting on those at the sides, so as to make a kind of coffin-lid, to protect the dead from the small stones and earth, which were gathered with hands and feet into a low mound over her form. She had been full of mirth the evening before, but now! The females, to the number of a dozen or more, remained all night at the dead woman's house, almost continually lifting up their voices in mournful lamentations, and early next morning went out to the grave, to sit there and weep, as the Jews supposed

Mary had done in the case of Lazarus.[1] This they continued to do for nine successive days. In the evening of the burial-day food was prepared by neighbours and consumed in a funeral meal by the afflicted household, who ate together. This is the counterpart to the "cup of consolation" which Jeremiah speaks of, as given to comfort mourners for the loss of their father or mother,[2] and to the "bread of men" which Ezekiel was forbidden to eat when his wife died.[3]

Near the cemetery is an old Christian church, the successor of one which stood on Mount Zion before the erection of the Church of the Sepulchre; that is, at least as early as 300 years after Christ's birth. In the times of the Crusaders apparently it was rebuilt, but in its present form it dates only from A.D. 1333, when it had come into the hands of the Franciscans. For 300 years back, however, the Mahommedans have taken it into their possession, and they guard what they think its more sacred parts with almost greater jealousy than they show about the Mosque of Omar. The Tomb of David was one of the holy places in the church as long ago as the reign of the Frankish kings, and it is still claimed as a glory of the spot by its present custodians, who say it is underground, and let no unbeliever see it. Probably there are ancient tombs below the present surface, but this is not apparently the place to look for the tomb of the Psalmist-king. A long, bare room, up a flight of steps in the building, is however open, on payment of a small fee; its attraction being the tradition that here Christ ate the Last Supper with His disciples. But the Jerusalem of Christ's day, I need hardly repeat, is buried below thirty feet of rubbish.

[1] John xi. 31. [2] Jer. xvi. 7.
[3] Ezek. xxiv. 17; 2 Sam. iii. 35; xii. 20.

From the edge of the hill there is a fine view of the Sultan's Pool, known as the traditional Lower Pool of Gihon—a huge reservoir, 245 feet broad at its upper, and 275 feet at its lower end; 592 feet long, and about forty feet deep. It has been made by building great dams across the valley, but they are of very little use, as there was no water in the pool when I saw it, though it had rained only a day or two before. The camels and other beasts of burden, however, were the better for the showers, for the bottom was covered with delicious fresh green, on which some were feasting as I passed. To get down from the cemetery, I had followed the line of some low and rough stone walls dividing the hill-side into different properties, but it was by no means a pleasant descent, so steep was the slope of about 100 feet. In summer the bottom of the pool is in great request as a threshing-floor, for which it is admirably fitted when the heat has withered up the grass which, in spring, covers its rocky surface. The pool has been made by removing the earth between the lower and upper dams, across the valley, leaving the rock in its natural state, so that it slopes down irregularly at the sides, with a narrow channel in the middle. A road crosses the dam at the lower end, the side walls of which are very much broken. In the centre there is a fountain—once fed by the aqueduct from Solomon's Pools near Bethlehem, which crosses the valley immediately above the upper end of the pool. The pool itself lies so low that it could only have been used to irrigate gardens lower down the valley, though, when watertight, it must have spread fertility far and wide, as it would contain about 19,000,000 gallons. The dam at the upper end is only slight. The present name of this huge reservoir is due to its having been repaired by Sultan Suleiman, but the excavation is very

ancient, Robinson supposing it to be the Lower Pool mentioned by Isaiah.[1] Nine small arches, spanning the valley, preserve the memory of the aqueduct which once poured its clear waters into the great cisterns on Mount Moriah: an incalculable benefit to a city so naturally deficient in its water-supply. It was to repair this artery of the common life that Pilate took funds from the Temple treasury, and thereby roused the fury of the priests at what they were bold enough to denounce to the ignorant multitude as a robbery of the Church. As if the gold lying idle in the Temple vaults could have been better used! Under the Turks, who do nothing for the good of any country unfortunate enough to be under them, and leave everything to go to destruction, this monument of the wise beneficence of antiquity is of no benefit to Jerusalem.

On the western side of the pool stands a row of fine almshouses, built within the last few years for poor Jews by their rich brethren in the West. A garden stretches out before them, but the soil is very rocky, and requires much labour for small results. On the brow of the slope over the houses, and belonging to the same charity, a stone windmill breaks the monotony of the view by its great, slow-circling vans.

South of the Sultan's Pool the valley leads to the east and becomes very narrow, steep rocks forming its wall on the under side, while on the upper side Mount Zion descends in steps like terraces, but very steeply. Olive and almond trees cast their soft shadows over the rising green of the little stony fields in the hollow and on the rocky sides of the hills, while on the east the walls of Jerusalem look down into the ravine. The whole scene is beautiful in its quiet repose. Yet it

[1] Isa. xxii. 9.

was in this narrow valley, now filled with budding fruit-trees and springing grain and sweet flowers, that the Israelites once offered their children to Moloch, and these very rocks on each side have echoed the screams of the innocent victims, and reverberated with the chants and drums of the priests, raised to drown the cries of agony. It is well called the Valley of Hinnom—"the Valley of the Groans of Children:"[1] a name which perpetuates the horror once excited by the scenes it witnessed; especially, it would seem, in this lower part. Here, under Ahaz, Manasseh, and Amon, the hideous ox-headed human figure of Moloch—the summer sun in his glowing and withering might—was raised in brass or copper, with extended arms, on which were laid, helplessly bound, the children given up by their parents "to pass through the fire" to him; a heated furnace behind the idol sending its flames through the hollow limbs, till the innocents writhed off into a burning fire beneath. Ahaz and Manasseh had set a royal example in this horrible travesty of worship, by burning alive some of their own children;[2] and what kings did, commoners would be ready to copy. Yet who can tell the agony of soul it must have cost a father or mother, among a race where sons were so great a glory, to give up one to such a death, as a religious act? How many among ourselves would be capable of a tribute of devotion to the true God fit to be mentioned alongside of this, as a surrender to Him of all that the heart loves best?

It was not till within less than thirty years of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldæans, that the idol and its accessories were swept away from the valley by the good Josiah,[3] and the place so defiled that

[1] גֵּי בְנֵי הִנֹּם (2 Kings xxiii. 10). Strictly, "of the Children of Groaning."
[2] 2 Kings xvi. 3; xxi. 6.
[3] 2 Kings xxiii. 10; Isa. xxx. 33 · Jer. vii. 31; xix. 6, 11, 12, 13.

it could never again be desecrated by this frightful worship. But so deeply had the horrors of the past printed themselves on the popular mind, that henceforth the spot bore the name of Tophet—"the Abomination"—"the Place to be Spat upon;" and in later times the very words Ge-Hinnom—"the Valley of Hinnom"—slightly changed into Gehenna, became the common name for hell. The destruction of Assyria is pictured by Isaiah as a huge funeral pile, "deep and large," with "much wood," "prepared for the king," and kindled by the breath of Jehovah, as if by "a stream of brimstone."[1] Jeremiah speaks of "high places" in this valley, as if children had been burned on different altars; and he can think of no more vivid image of the curse impending over Jerusalem than that it should become an abomination before God, like this accursed place.

The Hill of Evil Counsel rises on the south from the Valley of Hinnom; it owes its name to a tradition that the house of the high priest Caiaphas, in which the leaders of the Jews resolved on the death of our Lord, stood there. Beneath it the steep rocky sides of the valley are pierced with a great number of tombs, showing that this spot was used by the Jews in ancient times as a cemetery.[2] Some of these sepulchres are cut into domes in the rock and ornamented, others are mere holes for bodies, hewn in the face of the hill; some have many such holes dug out in the sides of a larger or smaller chamber, most of the entrances to these appearing to have been closed by a stone door, turning on a socket hinge, and secured by bolts. Wandering amidst these graves, once full, but now long empty, one feels himself surrounded by a city of the dead, the beginnings of which run back to the grey antiquity of the early Jewish kings. Close at hand, but a little higher

[1] Isa. xxx. 33.

[2] Some think the tombs Christian.

up the valley, is a spot with the evil name of Aceldama—"the Field of Blood,"[1] on which rises an old ruin thirty feet long and twenty wide, one side partly the naked rock, the other drafted stone, the whole forming a flat-roofed cover to a dismal house of the dead. Two caverns open in the floor, their rocky sides pierced with holes for bodies; and galleries of tombs run into the hill from the bottom. Holes in the roof are still seen, through which the corpses were let down by ropes, and there are marks of steps by which the tombs were entered. Here, say the local traditions, was "the Potters' Field," bought for the burial of strangers by the high priests with the thirty pieces of silver for which our Saviour was betrayed. Clay from around it is still used by the potters of Jerusalem.

About a hundred steps from Aceldama, Hinnom merges into another valley running along the south side of the city. Where the two thus join, the Tyropœon or Cheese-makers' Valley, from between Mounts Moriah and Zion, also opened out, in ancient times, on the north side before it was filled up by the wreck of the city and Temple. In those days both it and the Valley of Hinnom girdled Mount Zion from the west to the south-east, where the hill descends in huge steps, here and there rocky; the steps plentifully strewn with stone, and pitted with cisterns and small caves, in which the goats sleep at night, but veiled in part by olive, almond, and pomegranate trees. In David's time Zion was surrounded by a wall, forming the original city; but under Solomon, Moriah was encircled by a second wall, and ultimately the Tyropœon was incorporated with the two, by a rampart across the mouth of the valley to Ophel, the south-east spur of Moriah, which sinks down

[1] Acts i. 19.

from the height of the great Temple wall in several broad shelves and steep slopes, the last of which is not more than forty feet above the bottom of the valley. Rough, stony, and swift in its descents, the surface is, however, diligently cultivated wherever possible—of course in a rude Oriental way. On the lower of these slopes and terraces the Nethinim, or Temple slaves, lived in olden times,[1] while on those higher up and nearer the Temple were some of the houses of the priests.[2] The fortifications enclosing Ophel had grown old in the days of Jotham and Manasseh, and were consequently repaired, heightened, and strengthened by them,[3] while they were rebuilt by Ezra and Nehemiah after the return from Babylon, a lofty watch-tower being added,[4] the foundations of which, projecting from the main line of defence, have been discovered by the Palestine Fund explorers.[5] Shafts sunk near these show how stupendous the labour spent by the Hebrew kings on fortifying Jerusalem must have been, for the wall is yet standing to the height of sixty-six feet below the rubbish of ages, and the face of the hill was found to have been cut away, where needful, into perpendicular scarps from forty to sixty feet high.

Rounding the southern end of Ophel, and turning a little way north, you reach the famous Pool of Siloam, on the western side of the valley. It is fifty-two feet long and eighteen wide, some piers, like flying buttresses, standing on its north side, while part of a column rises in the middle of it. These are the remains of an old church, built over it thirteen hundred years ago, or of a monastery, erected at a spot so sacred, in the twelfth century. It was apparently to this pool that Christ sent

[1] Neh. iii. 26 ; xi. 21.
[2] Neh. iii. 21—26.
[3] 2 Chron. xxvii. 3 ; xxxiii. 14.
[4] Neh. iii. 25—27.
[5] *Recovery of Jerusalem.*

the blind man to wash his eyes,[1] and the miracle which followed naturally invested it with such peculiar sacredness that baths were erected under the ancient church, to let the sick have the benefits of the wondrous stream. You go down eight ancient stone steps to reach the water, which is used by the people for drinking, for washing their not particularly clean linen, and for bathing. Everything around is dilapidated: the stones loose, and in many cases fallen; the approach rough as the bottom of a quarry. At the north end a small tunnel opens in the rock, bringing the water from the Spring of the Virgin, which lies 1,700 feet higher up the valley. This ancient engineering work is about two feet wide, and from two to sixteen feet in height, with a branch cut due west from it to a shallow basin within the line of the ancient walls, where a round shaft more than forty feet deep has been sunk to reach it. On the top of this a great chamber hewn in the rock, with a flight of steps leading down to it, made it possible for the citizens, by covering over and hiding the spring outside, to cut off the supply of water from an enemy, while themselves, by means of this striking arrangement, enjoying it in safety, without leaving their defences. A notable discovery connected with the cutting of the main tunnel, which, as we have seen, is nearly one-third of a mile long, was made in 1880, by a youth, while wading up its mouth. Losing his footing, he noticed, as he was picking himself up, what looked like letters cut in the rocky side, and these on inspection proved to be an inscription left by the workmen, when they had finished their great undertaking. It appears that they began at both ends, but as engineering was hardly at its best three thousand years ago, their course was very far from being exactly straight,

[1] John ix. 7.

windings of more than 200 yards, like the course of a river, marking their work.[1] There are, in fact, several short branches, showing where the excavators found themselves going in a wrong direction, and abruptly stopped, to resume work in a truer line. When at last they met they proved to be a little on one side of each other, and had to connect their excavations by a short side cutting. The inscription, as translated by Professor Sayce, is as follows:—

"Behold the excavation! Now this is the history of the tunnel. While the excavators were lifting up the pick, each towards the other, and while there were yet three cubits to be broken through . . . the voice of one called to his neighbour, for there was an excess (?) in the rock on the right. They rose up . . . they struck on the west of the excavation—the excavators struck—each to meet the other, pick to pick. And then flowed the waters from their outlet to the Pool, for the distance of a thousand cubits and [three-fourths ?] of a cubit was the height of the rock over the excavation here."[2] Professor Sayce thinks that this undertaking, so wonderful for such an age and for so small a people, dates from about the eighth century before Christ, and Professor Mühlau refers it to that of Hezekiah,[3] while others think it in part, at least, a relic of the early inhabitants of Jerusalem before David.[4] The depth of the tunnel below the surface, at its lowest, is 156 feet. The slope is very small, so that the water must always have flowed with a gentle leisure from the spring to the pool: a characteristic which reminds us of the words of Isaiah in his prophecy of the

[1] The tunnel measures 570 yards: the straight course would have been only 368 yards.

[2] *Pal. Fund Rept.*, 1881, p. 284.

[3] Riehm, p. 1478.

[4] *Pal. Fund Rept.*, 1884, p. 75.

result of Israel's allying itself with Syria, instead of trusting in God, or, as he expresses it, in "the waters of Shiloah that go softly."[1] This unworthy confederacy would bring on the nation the overwhelming Euphrates-flood of an Assyrian invasion, terrible to imagine as a contrast to the placid flow of their gentle spring. The one stream was a symbol of the peacefulness of the kingdom of God, established in Israel; the other, of the stormy and violent kingdoms of the world. The present pool, into which the water still flows, was not originally, however, the only reservoir supplied by it. The remains of four other basins have been discovered, which were apparently once connected with it; and a little way from it, down the valley, is an ancient "Lower Pool," which lies to the east of the upper one, but now has its bottom overgrown with trees, the overflow from the higher pool having for centuries trickled past it instead of filling it. This lower pool, known as the Red Pool—from the colour of the soil—is famous for an old mulberry-tree, carefully guarded by stones, marking the spot on which, according to tradition, the great Prophet Isaiah was sawn asunder by Manasseh.

The Virgin's Well, from which the whole supply comes, lies at the bottom of two flights of stone steps—thirty in all—broken and partly ruined, and has the glory of being the only spring rising in the Temple Mount. Its basin is about twelve feet long, and five wide, and the bottom is covered with small stones; but it is no longer worthy of its fine name, for two men were bathing in it when I saw it last. The waters have the curious feature of overflowing into the tunnel only at intervals: from three to five times a day in rainy winter, twice a day in summer, and only once a day in autumn, while

[1] Isa. viii. 6.

after a dry winter the overflow takes place only once in three or four days. Explanation is easy. A deep natural basin in the interior of the rocks is fed by numerous streamlets, but it has only one narrow outlet, which begins near the bottom of the basin, and after rising above the top of it again descends, outwards. Whenever the stream rises to the bend in the outlet it begins to flow through it, and continues to flow, on the principle of the syphon, till the water in the hidden rock-basin has been lowered to below the point at which the bend commences. It is very possible that this peculiarity marks it as the Dragon's Pool of Nehemiah;[1] popular superstition supposing that the intermittent gush of waters was due to a gigantic water-monster in the hill, which drank up the stream and vomited it forth, in turn. The taste of the water is slightly salt and very unpleasant, from its having filtered through the vast mass of foul rubbish on which the city stands, and which has been soaked with the sewage of many centuries. The sides of the tunnel are covered, to a height of about three feet, with thin red cement, very hard, and full of pounded potsherds, and exactly like that with which, under the name of "homrah," cisterns in Palestine are lined at this time. The bottom is covered with a black slimy deposit, two or three inches thick, which makes the water still worse at Siloam than at the Virgin's Well. Still, from time to time water-carriers come to the one or the other to fill their water-skins; and women, with their great jars on their shoulders, like Hagar,[2] repair to them, likewise, for their household supply. Yet Siloam must have been far livelier than now in the olden times, when a fine church rose over the spring, and pilgrims bathed in a great tank beneath it. Where this was, there are now gardens. Already, in the days of Christ, perhaps from

[1] Neh. ii. 13. [2] Gen. xxi. 14.

the thought of the healing powers of the pool as issuing from Mount Moriah, it must have been the custom to wash in it, else the blind man would hardly have been directed in so few words to do so.[1] But even if washing was then common, one can only hope it was a little more thoroughly carried out than it is to-day.

South of Siloam there is an open space at the union of the Kedron, Tyropœon, and Hinnom valleys. Here, in ancient times, David and Solomon had their royal gardens,[2] and Jerome tells us that in his time it still boasted of delightful gardens, watered by the Fountain of Siloah.[3] To-day, the hollow, and even the lower slopes at the sides, are still covered with gardens, watered by countless rills from the pool, so that every bed of flowers or plants is constantly moist. When the heat of summer has burned up the landscape, till rock and soil alike are mere yellow stone, these gardens and terraces, fed and quickened by the never-ceasing flow, are richly green. Such cool, refreshing verdure, springing up in the hot months in the midst of universal barrenness, must have been a delight age after age, filling the soul of the godly Israelite of old with sweet imagery, such as the race has always loved. It may have been from these very gardens that Jeremiah, who lived most of his life in Jerusalem, had the touching words suggested to him: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."[4] It was the opening spring when I gave myself up to the impressions of the spot. The

[1] John ix. 7.
[2] Neh. iii. 15. Jos. *Ant.*, vii. 14, 4; ix. 10, 4.
[3] *Comm. in Jer.* vii. 30.
[4] Jer. xvii. 7, 8.

mighty light filled the heavens; Ophel and Moriah rose in long slopes or huge steps on the one side of the valley, and the village of Siloam, with its flat-roofed stone houses clinging to the bare hill, on the other; old walls of loose stone stretched, apparently without any plan, hither and thither over the hollow of the valley; the fruit-trees of these regions were putting forth their fresh leaves; the gardens were beautiful with tender green; the soft murmur of flowing water carried one over land and sea to his distant home; and as a setting to this fair picture, there was enough of barrenness on the hills around to heighten its charms by contrast. After the long cold months, all the seeds of life were quickening, at once, in the sunshine. One could realise the description of spring in the Song of Songs: "Lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land."[1]

A short distance south of the gardens is En Rogel, "the Fountain of the Scout," or, as the Targum has it, "the Fuller's Spring," which Josephus tells us used to be in the king's gardens.[2] Its present Arab name is "Job's Well," though the patriarch had never, of course, any connection with it. Through how many ages it has been used by man, may be in part realised from the fact that it is mentioned, under the name En Rogel, in Joshua, as the boundary between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.[3] Round this spot a very tragic history gathers.[4] It was here that Adonijah "slew sheep and oxen and fat cattle," and invited to the feast all his brothers, David's sons, and all the officers of his father, intending through their help to seize the kingdom and exclude Solomon. It was only

[1] Cant. ii. 11, 12.
[2] Jos. *Ant.*, vii. 14, 4.
[3] Josh. xv. 7.
[4] 1 Kings i. 9.

natural that he should have expected to reign, for after Absalom's death he was the eldest living son of David, having been born in Hebron, before his father's accession to the throne of Israel. Like Absalom, he was at once handsome and ambitious, and resembled him also in being heartless, for he did not wait for his father's death to get the throne, but tried to supplant him while he lived. Surrounded, like a king, with a body-guard, and followed by a strong force of retainers, he fancied all would prosper, now that David was sinking to his death. Had he not, moreover, the support of Joab, the head of the king's fighting men, and of Abiathar, the high priest? But the energy of Nathan the prophet spoiled the finely-contrived plot, and the wassail shouts—"God save King Adonijah!" —were rudely interrupted at En Rogel by the huzzas of the multitude at Gihon hailing Solomon as the new monarch. That this was their meaning was hastily told by runners from the scene. It was enough. The guests vanished, every man rising, in mortal terror, and going his own way. Joab and Adonijah escaped, for the time, through the new prince's clemency, but they could not leave off plotting, and, ere long, fell victims of a new attempt to seize the throne.[1]

The well is lined with masonry down to the rock, and is 125 feet deep in all, with a huge rock-hewn reservoir at the bottom, to collect the water running over the lower hard limestone, which we have seen so frequently elsewhere. The pit appears, indeed, to have been deepened at some unknown time, for a second chamber is found, thirteen feet above the lower one. The well is entirely dependent on the rainfall, but, deep though it be, it overflows after four or five days of winter rain. During the wet winter of 1873—4 a steady brook flowed

[1] 1 Kings ii. 13, ff.

from it, down the Kedron valley. When I saw it, it had about thirty feet of water, and it scarcely ever quite dries up. Towards autumn, when many cisterns in Jerusalem have but little water, and that very bad, a great quantity is obtained from En Rogel, hundreds of asses being employed daily in carrying filled water-skins up to the city, which lies from 600 to 700 feet above it, on the other side of the narrow valley. Women and maidens, also, resort to it, and have done so for immemorial ages, for it was by taking advantage of this that the faithful "wench" came and told the spies of David—Jonathan and Ahimaaz, sons of the high priest—that Absalom had rejected the counsel of Ahithophel.[1] The villagers of Siloam, upon the hill to the north-east of the well, drive a trade of their own in carrying water up to the city for sale to the poorer people; but they are a sorry set of cheats, often filling their skins, more or less, with air. Their extreme poverty is their only excuse, for they get no more than from a penny to sixpence for a skinful of water delivered in the city. It might have been thought that, with a valley between it and the town, the water would be sweet; but, though much better than that of Siloam, it still shows traces of sewage.

The view from En Rogel is very striking. The hills rise high, to both east and west. On the north, are the outlying slopes of Zion and Moriah, with part of the city walls, overhead, and to the south the eye follows the course of the valley to its south-eastern bend. There, the hill, which sinks gently southwards, offers a pleasant view of luxuriant olive-trees and springing fields, but the one east of the well is as rough and barren as the other is attractive. It bears the ominous name of the Hill of Offence, from the belief that it was here that Solomon

[1] 2 Sam. xvii. 17—22.

built temples to Chemosh, the abomination of the Moabites, and to the other heathen gods of the neighbouring peoples.[1] The Hill of Evil Counsel, opposite, is far less uninviting, for its slopes show patches of grain between the outcroppings of rock, though the solitary, weird-looking tree on its bare top is hardly a pleasant landmark.

A mass of ruinous walls, apparently very ancient, rise beside the mouth of En Rogel, but their history is unknown. Wall-plants hang from between the rows of large square stones in long waving festoons, and the low roof, once resting on stone arches, has partly fallen in, while grass and weeds cover what remains. Deep though it be, there is no way of drawing the water except by hand, as in the case of the well of Samaria, in the days of Christ.[2] Heaps of stones once forming the walls of an enclosure lie around, but, as we already know, the idea of repairing any building never enters into the head of an Oriental.

The Kedron valley runs northwards, past the Mount of Offence, which is east from it, though indeed the valley, strictly speaking, begins only from the south-east corner of Moriah, stretching for nearly a mile and a half, first north, with Mount Moriah on its western and the Mount of Olives on its eastern side; then west. It is best known as the Valley of Jehoshaphat, though indeed, as it sweeps past the Temple Hill, it is a ravine rather than a valley. Opposite Ophel, perched on a very steep and slippery scarp cut in the face of the hill, lies the village of Silwan, or Siloam. There could hardly be a better defence than its difficult approach, which must at all times have made it a striking feature in the valley. Names cling age after age to the same spots, in the East, and to this steep face of rock the villagers may be heard still giving the name Zehweileh, "the Slippery Place," which seems to

[1] 1 Kings xi. 7. [2] John iv. 11.

be only a slight change from Zoheleth, the name for the great "stone," or "rock," near En Rogel, close to which Adonijah held his ill-fated banquet.[1] I could not pretend to descend it, and was glad to take an easier road down to the valley, after having looked into the village, which is a curious place, part of the inhabitants living in large caves and tombs of great antiquity. There are some houses, but they are of the rudest: generally mere hovels, built at the mouths of tombs that form part of the ancient cemetery of the Jews of which so many remains are seen in the Valley of Hinnom, or, possibly, of a still more ancient burial-place. Here, truly, one is face to face with antiquity. On one spot M. Ganneau discovered an illegible inscription thought to contain the words "Beth Baal." The cliff, once evidently a quarry, rises high behind the houses and cave dwellings, so that the village is as inaccessible from above as from below. Everything is filthy in the extreme, even for the East, and the villagers, as becomes such a place, have a bad name for dishonesty. Very strangely, about a hundred of them are called Men of Dibon, and form a distinct body, apparently the descendants of a colony of Moabites sent from Dibon, in Moab, perhaps in connection with the altar of Chemosh, built by Solomon on the hill on which Siloam stands. The village may thus mark the spot where high places were built on "the Mount of Corruption" for "Ashtoreth, the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh, the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom [Moloch], the abomination of the children of Ammon."[2] But from whatever stock they are derived, the villagers are as industrious as they are churlish or given to larceny. I noticed two or three poor little oxen which had been let out to pick what they

[1] 1 Kings i. 9.

[2] 2 Kings xxiii. 13.

could get from between the stones on the steep hill-side: a rare sight in Palestine. A goatherd was playing on his monotonous reed pipe before his black flock, as they followed him along the side of Mount Moriah. A bare-legged, turbaned figure, in a loose white shirt, was guiding a primitive plough: one hand on its handle; the other holding a long goad, like a clumsy fishing-rod, with which to quicken the speed of his slow oxen. Near En Rogel some sheep were grazing. The Siloam poultry scratched the dust before the hovels of their owners, and crowed lustily against others at a distance. Some women in blue cotton passed with baskets of vegetables on their heads, and a knot of idlers gossiped under the shade of a fig-tree. A picture, one could not help thinking, of how it must have been in ancient Israel.

Making my way down the steep path, I crossed over to the Virgin's Fountain, to remind myself of the fantastic legend from which the place takes its name—that here the Virgin washed the swaddling-clothes of our Lord—and to listen once more to the murmur of the water, and then went down the two flights of steps to the opening of the tunnel which conducts it to Siloam, the favourite bathing-place of the men and boys of the neighbourhood.

END OF VOLUME I.

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